



DANIEL DE FOE
HIS MIND AND ART

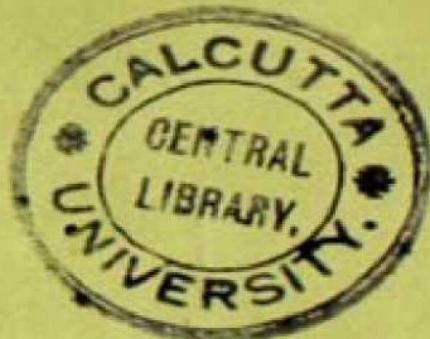


DANIEL DE FOE

HIS MIND AND ART

By

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Dedicated To
PROFESSOR P. N. BANERJEE, M.A., B.L.,
Barrister-at-Law,
Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University



PREFACE

I have laid stress in these pages on the art and technique of De Foe as a novelist.. I have also tried to suggest that the mind which was developed at the Newington Green Academy, which applied itself to trade and politics and found a congenial field in projects, is also the mind we see at work in the novels. It is eminently practical, and its qualities are moderation, sanity, a versatility of interest, an aptitude for detail, accuracy, and a virile and vivid imagination, usually pictorial in character.

No simple description of De Foe's character will resolve the anomalies we find in it. His public conduct cannot yet be fully explained and judged. The researches of Lee, Aitken, and others and the publication of De Foe's correspondence with Harley have, however, cleared up many obscure passages in his life. Finally, Professor Sutherland's careful appraisement has dispersed much of the fog that still clung to his public career.

De Foe was a born realist. Whatever he did was inspired by a sense of fact. He was also a born adventurer, and cannot be regarded merely as a self-seeker with an eye on the main chance. His indefatigable labours in the public cause, often the source of serious troubles to himself, are the best vindication of his conduct. He enjoyed the confidence, if not the esteem, of eminent Statesmen—King William, Halifax, Harley and Godolphin—to name only the chief of them. He was personally known to Queen Anne, who apparently trusted him.

He was, however, secretive. A greater openness of temper might have exposed him less to criticism; but being a sort of diplomat himself, he often concealed, and sometimes tampered with, the truth. His ends were usually disinterested, though the means he employed to attain them were not always free from reproach. In public life, he neither betrayed the principles in which he believed nor the men who had helped him and were his benefactors. He would not be found consistent if his loyalty to any party was set up as the criterion; but he had no faith in either of the parties as such. Nor indeed did they much deserve it. Justice demands that we should regard him as



a political pragmatist rather than as an opportunist. There is ample justification for this view of his conduct.

I did not proceed to the study of De Foe with any preconception about his art, and was led principally by my admiration to choose him as the subject of my special study. The plan of the present work emerged at the end of ~~the~~ first year of my research at Cambridge from an attempt to survey within the compass of a short essay the material I had collected.

In Chapter I I have examined *A Journal of the Plague Year* for the light it throws upon the workings of De Foe's memory and imagination. Education had a very important effect upon De Foe as a writer, and I have tried to examine his ideas on education in Chapter II with special reference to his *Compleat English Gentleman*. De Foe's life-long interest in trade contributed significantly to his attitude. In Chapter III I have indicated this interest in the course of a brief analysis of his *Complete English Tradesman*. In Chapter IV I have considered De Foe's social criticism and planning for the future, taking his *Essay upon Projects* as the principal source for the purpose. In Chapter V I have tried to review De Foe's political conduct as described by him in his *Appeal to Honour and Justice*. In Chapter VI I have discussed his narrative and dramatic qualities and other cognate matters. I have tried to show in Chapter VII that didacticism forms a basic element in his novels. This point has been stressed in an examination of *Robinson Crusoe*. In Chapter VIII I have discussed De Foe's contribution to the conception of character with reference to his character-sketches and the characters in his novels. In Chapter IX I have examined the plot in *Robinson Crusoe* and have suggested the elements of symbolism it contains.

It will be seen from the above that I have followed a chronological order. Beginning with De Foe's earliest memories as preserved in the *Journal*, I have proceeded first to consider his education and then the chief interests he developed—Trade, Planning for the future, Politics, etc. I have concluded with a consideration of the symbolism in *Robinson Crusoe*, at once his greatest romance and the embodiment of his ripest reflections on life.

Some of the material in this dissertation has not, as far as I know, previously received any critical attention. To this class belong the character-sketches, allegories, and



short stories included in the present work. I have analysed *Some Memoirs of a Converted Thief* (Chapter VI) to show that it is the only story by De Foe in the Picaresque Tradition. This has not been previously pointed out. Chapters I, VII, and IX discuss the didactic element and the plot or the pattern in the novels. As far as I know, such analysis has not been attempted by ~~any one~~, apart from Professor Secord whose work in the field is, however, different from mine. In Chapter I, I have also discussed exhaustively the element of memory in the reconstruction of the past in the *Journal* from various points of view. Professor Sutherland thinks that the *Journal* may quite possibly incorporate some of De Foe's early memories and draws attention to a passage as suggesting the fact. The material already used by other writers has generally been reinterpreted by me.

I have received valuable assistance from the works of Lee, Aitken, Trent, Secord, and Sutherland. Of these authorities Professor Sutherland's *Defoe* has been my constant companion. I have frequently referred to the second and third volumes of Lee's *De Foe*, containing all that De Foe published in *Mist's* and *Applebee's Journals* etc., and also to Professor Secord's Facsimile Edition of the *Review* in twenty-two volumes. In every case, I have clearly indicated the sources of my information in the footnotes, acknowledging my indebtedness to the particular author concerned.

In conclusion I should like to make my grateful acknowledgements to Professor James Sutherland, M.A., B.Litt. (Oxon), of London University, and to Mr L. J. Potts, M.A. (Cantab), Lecturer in English, University of Cambridge and Fellow, Queen's College, Cambridge, for the help I obtained from them. Professor Sutherland indicated to me the lines of study I should pursue for collecting my material and Mr Potts read chapter by chapter all that I wrote, suggesting improvements by his valuable criticism. I offer Professor Sutherland and Mr Potts my sincere thanks for their guidance in my research. I should like also to express my deep gratitude to Mr. W. S. Thatcher, M.A., Censor, Fitzwilliam House, Cambridge, for the constant friendly advice and help I received from him and also for his generous hospitality to me.

I could not have proceeded to England for pursuing a course of research but for the offer of the Sir Rashbehary



PREFACE

Ghose Travelling Fellowship which I had the honour of enjoying for three successive terms. For this financial assistance and for constant encouragement I received, I wish to convey my special thanks to the Hon'ble Dr S. P. Mookerjee, M.A., D.Litt., LL.D., Barrister-at-Law, now a Dominion Minister of India, and to Professor P. N. Banerjee, M.A., B.L., Barrister-at-Law, Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University, to whom the work is inscribed as a mark of gratitude.

Cambridge, 1946.



CONTENTS

| CHAP. | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I A Journal of the Plague Year ... | 1 |
| II Academy Education : The Compleat English Gentleman | 24 |
| III The Complete English Tradesman ... | 46 |
| IV An Essay Upon Projects ... | 69 |
| V An Appeal to Honour and Justice ... | 87 |
| VI The Island of St Vincent ... | 114 |
| VII The Family Instructor ... | 152 |
| VIII Characters ... | 179 |
| IX Robinson Crusoe ... | 234 |
| A List of the Most Important Works Consulted ... | 263 |
| Index ... | 271 |

CHAPTER I

A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR.

"Surely never City, at least, of this Bulk and Magnitude, was taken in a Condition so perfectly un-prepar'd for such a dreadful Visitation, whether I am to speak of the Civil Preparations, or Religious"

A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 112.

In the *Review* for August 26, 1712, De Foe published "the exact copy of one of the Bills of Mortality or Weekly Bills, being for the third week in September, 1665". The observations he made in this connexion are very similar to those we find in his *Journal of the Plague Year*, published nearly ten years later¹ "I need not tell the Reader here, that at the Time that this Bill was so high, the City was so thin of inhabitants, that one might walk from *Aldgate* to *Ludgate*, and not meet, or see 100 People; That the generallity of the People were all fled, at least all such as had any Retreat; That above 70,000 were dead at that Time of the Plague, and in their Graves, *Inclusive of this Week*; That Grass grew in the Streets, in the Markets, and on the Exchange; and nothing but Death and Horror was to be seen in every place"². Details about wrong entries in the Bills

¹ In the "Review" for August 12, 1712, there is a prediction that "*the Plague will visit Britain*"; in the "Review" for August 23, 1712, De Foe shows how since 1704, the plague every year has come nearer to England; in 1704 it appeared in the Turkish countries of Bulgaria and Walachia; in 1705 in Upper Poland, in 1706 it came down the Vistula, attacked Warsaw; in 1707 Dantzick felt the terrible Visitation . . . etc. (Saturday, August 23, 1712, Facsimile Book 22.)

² "Review" August 26, 1712, p. 15, Facsimile Book 22.



made with a view to escaping the rigours of the law also anticipate the *Journal*. It is quite possible that De Foe collected his material and conceived the idea of writing the *Journal* at this early date but it was not till after the Plague at Marseilles and in France generally which he describes in *Applebee's Journal* and *The Daily Post* between August 6, 1720 and November 4, 1721 that the book was finally presented to the world.

At the date of the Plague De Foe was about five years old³. If he was in London during the visitation of 1665 he probably saw and heard a good deal of what he was to write later about it, and there is no doubt that considerable additions to his knowledge were made by people who had witnessed the Plague. Two statements made by him tend to support the view that he was in London in this memorable period. In the *Introduction* to *Due Preparations for the Plague*, he wrote : "I very particularly remember the last visitation of this kind which afflicted this nation in 1665, and have had occasion to converse with many other persons who lived in this city all the while"⁴. Later in 1723 he wrote again : "I remember so long ago as the great Plague year, the People were just Alarm'd in this Manner by the same sort of Folks (Astrologers)"⁵. The internal evidence provided by the *Journal* is also in favour of the same assumption.

³ A Journal of the Plague Year Edited by G. A. Aitken, Everyman's Library, Introduction, p. IX ; see Sutherland, De Foe, p. 283 ; G. A. Aitken, The Contemporary Review for February, 1890 ; and The Athenaeum for 23 August, 1890.

⁴ Due Preparations for the Plague, Aitken, vol. 15, Author's Introduction, p. 6.

⁵ Applebee's Journal, February 2, 1723 ; William Lee, Daniel De Foe, His Life and Recently Discovered Writings, London (1869), vol. III, p. 98.

One is surprised, for example, at the number and the nature of the observations made by the supposed writer from his "Chamber Window". The mass exodus from the capital by the panic-stricken people at the advent of the Plague was seen from the window : "Indeed nothing was to be seen but Waggons and Carts, with Goods, Women, Servants, Children, Etc. Coaches fill'd with People of the better Sort, and Horsemen attending them, and all hurrying away; then empty Waggons, and Carts appear'd, and Spare-horses with Servants, who it was apparent were returning or sent from the Countries to fetch more People it was a Sight which I cou'd not but look on from Morning to Night; for indeed there was nothing else of Moment to be seen". From his window seat the Saddler who tells the story sees a frenzied clergyman calling upon God to spare the city : "With his Hands lifted up, [he] repeated that part of the *Liturgy* of the Church continually, '*Spare us good Lord, spare thy People whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious Blood*' . . . these were only the dismal Objects which represented themselves to me as I look'd thro' my Chamber Windows". Another scene, also observed from the window, is about a plague-stricken man in maniacal flight with his whole family in hot pursuit : "What could be more Affecting, than to see this poor Man come out into the open Street, run Dancing and Singing, and making a thousand antick Gestures, with five or six Women and Children running after him, crying, and calling upon him, for the Lord's sake to come back. . . .

⁶ A Journal of the Plague Year, Shakespeare Head Edition, p. 8.

⁷ Ibid., p. 126.



This was a most grievous and afflicting thing to me, who see it all from my own Windows".⁸ The scene took hold of his imagination. For he wrote again about it: "many dismal Spectacles represented themselves in my View, out of my own Windows, and in our own Street, as that particularly from *Harrow-Alley*, of the poor outrageous Creature which danced and sung in his Agony, and many others there were."⁹

It can be well believed that some of these incidents were actually seen by De Foe from the vantage point of the window. For as a child of five, he could hardly have much access to the world outside in a period of such frightful infection.

Outside of the *Journal* De Foe does not represent any scene in which sound or silence has any imaginative significance. The only exception seems to be a passage in *Captain Singleton* where the cries of wild animals are described: "there was a Noise and Yelling, and Howling, and all sort of such Wilderness Musick on every Side of us, as if all the Beasts of the Desart were assembled to devour us".¹⁰ Here, too, he tends to be general in the phrase "such Wilderness Musick", betraying a lack of precision which does not, as a rule, characterise his visual images. Most of the accounts into which sound enters as an element he dismisses perfunctorily; nor indeed do they deserve serious attention, as they are mostly concerned with the report of a gun which kills a bird or a beast or disperses primitive people who are terrified by it. In his *Imaginary Destruction of the Island of St. Vincent* there is a curious mistake in his conception of sound. The island,

⁸ A Journal of the Plague Year, Shakespeare Head Edition, p. 209.

⁹ Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁰ Captain Singleton, Shakespeare Head Edition, p. 111.

we are told, was blown up sky high in a flash of awful brilliance, and the falling stones made sounds "equal to that of the loudest Cannon" and "of which the people in these Islands, as well as in the Ships, heard about a thousand or twelve hundred distinct Blows or Reports and supposed it to be the Noise of Guns."¹¹ The stones flung up into the air could not make such a large number of distinct sounds unless they fell with more or less order. In *Robinson Crusoe* a further example of insensitiveness to sound is shown in the account that follows the discovery of the footprint in the sand. Crusoe speaks in the first person of looking "behind me at every two or three Steps, mistaking every Bush and Tree, and fancying every Stump at a Distance to be a Man; nor is it possible to describe how many various Shapes affrighted Imagination represented Things to me in, how many wild Ideas were found every Moment in my Fancy, and what strange unaccountable Whimsies came into my Thoughts by the Way"¹². In all the lengthy account of the fears that assail him there is no reference to noise of any kind as an additional source of terror. It seems not a little strange that De Foe should fail to realise the alarm that the slightest noise can cause when one is under the dread of an enemy suddenly appearing.

In *Robinson Crusoe* the earthquake which dislodged a rock, nearly rolling over Crusoe is described thus: "the Noise of the falling of the Rock awak'd me as it were, and rousing me from the stupify'd Condition I was in, fill'd me with Horror, and I thought of nothing then but the Hill falling upon my Tent and all my household Gods, and

¹¹ Mist's Journal, July 5, 1718; Lee, vol. II, p. 52.

¹² *Robinson Crusoe*, Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. I, p. 178.



burying all at once”¹³. Here is another opportunity lost for an imaginative appreciation of sound. It may be correct to conclude from the examples, positive and negative so far examined, that De Foe was not at home when he tried to describe sound of any kind. He was either vague, inadequate or inaccurate in his observation.

To this generalisation *A Journal of the Plague Year* is an exception. For the most memorable descriptions in this book are those which are concerned with sound—with cries, screams and shrieks of the dying and the despondent. The explanation, very likely, is that behind most of them there is a personal experience—that these scenes were actual memories which he recollects fifty odd years later. Indeed some of the passages strongly suggest that the author is remembering things he had actually heard. The following is one of such passages : “I wish I could repeat the very Sound of those Groans, and of those Exclamations that I heard from some poor dying Creatures, when in the Height of their Agonies and Distress ; and that I could make him that read this hear, as I imagine I now hear them, for the Sound seems still to Ring in my Ears”¹⁴. Another passage : “Passing thro’ *Token-House-Yard* in *Lothbury*, of a sudden a Casement violently opened just over my Head, and a Woman gave three frightful Skreetches, and then cry’d, *Oh ! Death, Death, Death !* in a most inimitable Tone, and which struck me with Horror and a Chilness, in my very Blood”¹⁵. The impression that the cries he represents with such dramatic force were actually heard by him is still further strengthened by the words :

¹³ Robinson Crusoe, Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. I, p. 92.

¹⁴ *Journal of the Plague Year*, p. 127.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.”

"I remember" by which a number of such passages are introduced : "I remember, and while I am writing this Story, I think I hear the very Sound of it, a certain Lady and an only Daughter, a young Maiden about 19 Years old, and who was possessed of a very Considerable Fortune; they were only Lodgers in the House where they were . . . two Hours after they came home, the young Lady complain'd she was not well; in a quarter of an Hour more, she vomited, and had a violent Pain in her Head . . . the Mother undressed the young Woman . . . discovered the fatal Tokens on the Inside of her Thighs. Her Mother, not being able to contain herself, threw down her Candle, and scriekt out in such a frightful Manner, that it was enough to place Horror upon the stoutest Heart in the World; nor was it one Skream, or one Cry, but the Fright having seiz'd her Spirits, she fainted first, then recovered, then ran all over the House, up the Stairs and down the Stairs, like one distracted, and indeed really was distracted . . . and as I was told, never came throughly to herself again : As to the young Maiden, she was a dead Corpse from that Moment"¹⁶.

The author describes silence as well in a way which cannot be matched out of any of his stories; although there was no want of scope, at least in *Robinson Crusoe*, and during the many voyages undertaken by his men and women. London streets were often desolate, as they must have been during such a calamity and so the author writes of "a pro-

¹⁶ *Journal of the Plague Year*, pp. 68-69. Professor Sutherland quotes the passage introducing it with the remarks: "It is surely not without significance that the cries of the wretched are insisted upon by De Foe all through the *Journal* to such an extent that the repetition becomes almost monotonous." De Foe, pp. 7-8.

found Silence in the Streets¹⁷, and of a similar desolation in areas outside of the City : "Nor was the Silence and Emptiness of the Streets so much in the City as in the Outparts"¹⁸.

In the *Journal* as distinct from his other works, the author seems to employ all his senses to capture to the last detail everything belonging to the stricken city. Almost of equal significance with the cries heard are the sights seen. In his novels generally we have often striking proof of his visual imagination, to which most of his appeals are confined. Of the several kinds of imagination of which we have evidence in the *Journal*, the following are a few illustrations : ". . . I seldom walk'd into the Fields. . . . But when I did walk I always saw a great many poor Wanderers at a Distance, but I could know little of their Cases"¹⁹. The author calls the Pit in Aldgate a "~~dreadful~~ Gulph", "for such it was rather than a Pit"²⁰. Of a man who followed the dead cart which carried the bodies of "his Wife and Several of his Children", he says, "they saw a Man go to and again, mufled up in a brown Cloak, and making Motions with his Hands, under his Cloak, as if he was in a great Agony"²¹. Here is another picture, showing the utmost economy in the description : "a Servant-Maid had been brought down to the Door dead, and the Buriers or Bearers, as they were call'd, put her into the Cart, wrapt only in a green Rug, and carried her away"²². The pathos and simplicity of the picture is symbolical.

We have below a passage in which the sense of smell is appealed to : ". . . if we came to go into a Church, when it was any thing full of

¹⁷ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 128.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 123.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

²¹ Ibid., p. 75.

²² Ibid., p. 60.

People, there would be such a Mixture of Smells at the Entrance, that it was much more strong, tho' perhaps not so wholesome, than if you were going into an Apothecary's or Druggist's Shop; in a Word, the whole Church was like a smelling Bottle, in one Corner it was all Perfumes, in another Aromaticks, Balsamicks, and Variety of Drugs, and Herbs; in another Salts and Spirits, as every one was furnish'd for their own preservation".²³

Another passage depicts a scene of utmost agony. The appeal here is more mixed: "some went roaring, and crying, and wringing their Hands along the Street; some would go praying, and lifting up their Hands to Heaven, calling upon God for Mercy".²⁴

We have in the following a striking illustration of what may be called moral imagination: the reference is to the dreadful Pit at Aldgate: "'Tis a speaking Sight, says he [the sexton], and has a Voice with it, and a loud one, to call us all to Repentance".²⁵ We shall conclude the section by an example of the dramatic imagination out of the many which occur in the *Journal*. A man who had taken great care to avoid catching the infection and thought himself perfectly secure, discovered that at the Bullhead Tavern in Grace Church Street he was with some people, one of whom had succumbed to the Plague and was already infected when he was last in his company. Talking to his neighbour about him, he did not still know that the man was dead. So he broke out into an exclamation, "'Why he is not dead, is he!' upon which his Neighbour still was silent, but cast up his Eyes, and said something to himself;

²³ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 253.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 75.



at which the first Citizen turned pale, and said no more but this, *then I am a dead Man too*, and went Home immediately, and sent for a neighbouring Apothecary to give him something preventive, for he had not yet found himself ill; but the Apothecary opening his Breast, fetch'd a Sigh, and said no more, but this, *look up to God*; and the Man died in a few Hours²⁶. A good deal of the dramatic force of the passage comes from its condensation. Not a word is said that can be omitted and the scriptural simplicity and directness also greatly contribute to the effect.

De Foe had two distinct motives in writing the *Journal*. One was to exhibit the plague as a Judgement on the city for its sins and dissensions. The other, a practical one, was to show what civil and religious preparation was necessary ~~in case of~~ another visitation, which at the time the *Journal* was published, seemed probable. The first of the two motives gives coherence to the account and makes of it an artistic whole. The second one, already revealed in the pages of *Due Preparations for the Plague* supplies the usual didactic purpose that we find not only in the novels but also in the short stories told by De Foe.

We may now go on to see how he brings this off.

The idea of a Judgement on the city was not in any way original. "The Government . . . appointed Publick prayers, and Days of fasting and Humiliation, to make publick Confession of Sin, and implore the Mercy of God, to avert the dreadful Judgment, which hung over their Heads"²⁷. But De Foe makes this conclusion acceptable by show-

²⁶ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 239.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

ing the agony of the sufferers against the background of their sins. The author builds up the atmosphere with great care so that we can see that the madness and distraction of the people arise from their sins. At the beginning they depended on spurious remedies instead of trusting to divine mercy for their deliverance. But as the plague reaches the peak period and as people realize the folly of their misplaced trust, they gradually return to the worship of God with a contrite heart; the differences that kept them divided also disappear. God now stays his hand and the sense of deliverance descends upon the stricken people, freely expressed by a feeling of sincere thankfulness.

The Judgment came down on the City largely because of the wickedness of the Restoration Court. "their crying Vices might, without Breach of Charity, be said to have gone far, in bringing that terrible Judgment upon the whole Nation"²⁸. Although there is no general indictment of the people in the *Journal*, De Foe nevertheless thought their offences a sufficient justification for the divine wrath and so he wrote in his Introduction to *Due Preparations*, "witness the increase of plays and playhouses, one being now building, though so many already in use; witness the public trading and stock-jobbing on the Sabbath day; witness the raging avarice of the times, by which the civil interest of the nation is ruined and destroyed; witness also our feuds, divisions, and heats, as well in religious differences as those that are political, which are all carried up to dreadful extremes"²⁹. Blasphemy was prevalent in certain quarters, illustrated by the account in the

²⁸ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 19.

²⁹ Author's Introduction to Due Preparations, p. 6, Aitken, vol. XV.



*Journal of the "dreadful Set of Fellows"*³⁰, who haunted the Pye Tavern, "continually mocking and jeering at all that shew'd themselves religious, or serious, or that were any way touch'd with the Sence of the terrible Judgment of God upon us"³¹.

The atmosphere of the *Journal* suggests that it was no natural danger that threatened the great city. The Saddler who recounts the facts that came under his observation, or of which he heard at the time of the Plague, was at first uncertain whether to stay in the city or go into the country till his doubts were resolved supernaturally by "the strong Impressions which I had on my Mind for staying"³². As the Plague grew in virulence or abated for a short while, people were "allarm'd, and unallarm'd again, and this several times"³³. The fears of the people were increased by several odd accidents to such an extent that ~~that~~ ~~it~~ was realy (really) a wonder the whole Body of the People did not rise as one Man, and abandon their Dwellings, leaving the Place as a Space of Ground designed by Heaven for an Akeldama, doom'd to be destroy'd from the Face of the Earth"³⁴. There was a comet or a blazing star right over the city which "foretold a heavy Judgment, slow but severe, terrible and frightful"³⁵. There were a few who ran about the city, making frightful predictions, "and One in particular, who like *Jonah* to *Nineveh*, cry'd in the Streets, yet forty Days and LONDON shall be destroy'd"³⁶. Another a "naked Creature cry'd, O! the Great and the Dreadful God! and said no more"³⁷. The terror of the times was still further aggravated by dreams and their

³⁰ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 78.

³¹ Ibid., p. 81.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

³² Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

³³ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

interpretations by old women which "put abundance of People even out of their Wits"³⁸. Some saw Apparitions, and some "an Angel cloth'd in white, with a fiery Sword in his Hand, waving it, or brandishing it over his Head"³⁹. In fact they were all overcome with delusion and "they heard Voices that never spake, and saw Sights that never appear'd . . . the Imagination of the People was really turn'd wayward and possess'd"⁴⁰. The astrologers now came in large numbers and "added Stories of the Conjunctions of Planets in a malignant Manner and with a mischievous Influence"⁴¹. The town swarmed with "a wicked Generation of Pretenders to Magick"⁴², and led by them the unhappy people started "wearing Charms, Philters, Exorcisms, Amulets . . . as if the Plague was not the Hand of God, but a kind of a Possession of an evil Spirit"⁴³. The spectral figure of Solomon Eagle "quite naked, and with a Pan of burning Charcoal on his Head"⁴⁴ strode into the city's streets, denouncing Judgement, and adding horror to the scene. Rumours about happenings at the other end of the city also contributed to the terror. Not the least fearful thing in this atmosphere is the incidents mentioned like the Master of a house hanging himself⁴⁵, or a man setting fire to his bed⁴⁶ or rushing naked through the streets and plunging into the Thames⁴⁷, all because the agony of the distemper was beyond endurance. And how awful must have sounded the familiar cry of the Bell Man, "Bring out your dead," breaking the silence of the streets as the wheels of the dead cart

³⁸ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 26.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 215.

⁴² Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 197.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 39.



creaked and crunched along what used to be busy thoroughfares, but now empty, and often overgrown with grass? And what a world of pity was conveyed by the words, "Lord Have Mercy upon us!" inscribed on hundreds of houses in which people lay in the agony of death or in dread of infection from which they had little hope of escape.

The Saddler who tells the story of the Plague declares it repeatedly to be a Judgement from Heaven⁴⁸, "I look'd upon this dismal Time to be a particular Season of Divine Vengeance"⁴⁹. The vicious and the wicked were swept away and those who had the luck to survive grew penitent. The mockers at The Pye Tavern had a swift end. Three or four days after they had given signal proof of their impiety, the worst offender of them "was struck from Heaven, with the Plague, and died in a most deplorable Manner; and in a Word they were every one of them carried into the great Pit . . . before it was quite fill'd up"⁵⁰. The same fate overtook "all the Predictors, Astrologers, Fortune-tellers, and what they call'd cunning-Men, Conjurers, and the like . . . some have been critical enough to say, that every one of them dy'd"⁵¹. "Quackery and Mountebank" also went the same way. "Some fancied they were all swept away in the Infection to a Man, and were for calling it a particular Mark of God's Vengenace upon them, for leading the poor People into the Pit of Destruction, merely for the Lucre of a little Money they got by them"⁵². The Plague seemed to light a purifying fire which, although it destroyed some honest men, burnt to

⁴⁸ A Journal of the Plague Year, pp. 44, 81, 83, 108, 124, 236, 298, 300.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 217.

⁵² Ibid., p. 292.



ashes without mercy all imposters and knaves who found in human suffering either an occasion for profit or gratification.

Indeed the men repented of their folly as soon as they discovered the ineffectiveness of charms, and philters, quacks and astrologers, "those unperforming creatures," and they cried in bewilderment, "Lord, have Mercy upon us, what shall we do?" "Many Consciences were awakened, many hard Hearts melted into Tears"⁵³. At the time the death-rate rose to a thousand a day, "this Calamity of the People made them very humble"⁵⁴, and increasingly there was now "an indication of a more serious Mind"⁵⁵. The dying creatures called out for "Ministers to Comfort them and pray with them, to Counsel them, and to direct them, calling out to God for Pardon and Mercy, and confessing aloud their past Sins"⁵⁶. In the episode of three poor men, subsequently joined by thirteen others, who successfully made their escape from the city at the height of the Plague, we are told, "that the first Sabbath Day the poor People kept retir'd, worship'd God together, and were heard to sing Psalms"⁵⁷. People crowded into churches, "as if their Lives were of no Consequence, compar'd to the Work which they came about there: Indeed, the Zeal which they shew'd in Coming, and the Earnestness and Affection they shew'd in their Attention to what they heard, made it manifest what a Value People would all put upon the Worship of God, if they thought every Day they attended at the Church that it would be their Last"⁵⁸. The Saddler returns to the same subject a little later: "Indeed nothing was more strange,

⁵³ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 41.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 213.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 127.



than to see with what Courage the People went to the public Service of God, even at that time when they were afraid to stir out of their Houses upon any other Occasion"⁵⁹. The religious differences that kept men apart also largely disappeared. Dissenters freely preached in the room of the regular clergy and they themselves attended the parish churches.

The course of the Plague was at last stayed : "doubtless the Visitation it self is a Stroke from Heaven . . . a Messenger of his Vengeance, and a loud Call . . . to Humiliation and Repentance, according to that of the Prophet *Jeremiah*. . . . If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them"⁶⁰. Men repented and God at last relented. When people saw their deliverance was full, they expressed their sense of the divine mercy. Strangers spoke to each other, expressing their thankfulness : "Another Man, I heard him, adds to his Words, 'tis all wonderful, 'tis all a Dream : Blessed be God, says a third Man, and let us give Thanks to him, for 'tis all his own doing . . . the very common People went along the Streets, giving God Thanks for their Deliverance".⁶¹

If the question is asked, what constitutes the pattern of De Foe's novels, the answer briefly is; repentance at the end of a career of wickedness arising from poverty. We find the elements of sin and repentance in the *Journal* as well, the only difference being that instead of an individual repenting, it is a whole nation that repents under divine castigation. The narrator himself is not deficient in his piety and he is isolated from the

⁵⁹ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 254.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 275.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 301.

anonymous crowds who pass from the torment of fear and of physical pain to the sense of deliverance achieved by repentance. This is because we are called upon to witness the fortunes of a nation and not those of an individual, although we may see with an individual's eyes and hear with his ears.

De Foe's second motive in writing the *Journal* is to show what preparations are necessary should the Plague come again. The religious part of this preparation is indicated in the story of the poor Waterman whose "true Dependence, and [a] Courage resting on God" are mentioned with admiration. Not the least important thing about the Waterman is the care he took to avoid infection, "he used all possible Caution for his Safety".⁶² For the Plague, our author points out, was not "the less a Judgment for its being under the Conduct of humane Causes and Effects".⁶³ De Foe does not advise anyone to follow the example of the Saddler who was under a special providence and hence no harm came to him despite his being in the city throughout the whole period of the Plague. His prescription, however, is "*that the best Physick against the Plague is to run away from it*".⁶⁴ But if one wanted to continue in the city, mischief could be avoided by laying up stores of provision in one's house and locking oneself up entirely till the danger was over.⁶⁵ Suggestions about organising a suitable number of Pest Houses are made and the question of the shutting up of houses is carefully considered. This part of the *Journal*, if it could be isolated from the rest, shows De Foe's close sense of fact as the episodes and descriptions illustrate a

⁶² A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 132.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 236.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 241.



high degree of imagination. By returning to practical questions like preventive measures, public fires, symptoms of the disease, the period of incubation, etc., the author provides relief from the horrors he so successfully evokes. Thus after describing the popular madness caused by an unscrupulous trading in charms, philters, etc., he returns to the pedestrian manner with an account of the work done by the Lord Mayor, "a very Sober and Religious Gentleman" whose lengthy orders concerning the Plague are then quoted. Again, he mentions the frightful conduct of two plague-stricken men, one of whom forcibly kisses a "poor unhappy Gentlewoman, a substantial Citizen's Wife," telling her that he had the Plague which "kill'd her in a very few Days."⁶⁶ The other pays a visit to a family seated at supper, walking directly into the middle of them, and ~~announcing~~ that "he only came to take his leave of them" adding as explanation, "I have got the Sickness, and shall die tomorrow Night".⁶⁷ The little girls were "frighted almost to Death" and others were all terrified. But the family, we are told, mercifully lived unharmed. After these two accounts, the author states a few points in favour of the shutting up of houses. A man who tried to escape from a house that was shut up and took a night's lodging at the "Pyed Bull" Inn, where he had to lie in a garret for want of better accommodation, called for a pint of warm ale. The servant forgot to supply it, and next morning he was discovered stark dead in his bed⁶⁸. After this, the author speaks of many families which left the city at the beginning of the Plague, entrusting their town houses to the care of friends.

⁶⁶ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 195.

⁶⁷ Ibid.,

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

De Foe's didactic purpose thus sustains the artistic—his account of various preventive measures taken during the Plague of 1665 with suggestions of his own in case there was another outbreak in the future not only diversify the tale but afford dramatic relief.

The Saddler is the third factor contributing to the pattern. We see with his eyes, and the cries that pierce his heart also penetrate our own. The individual cries of misery and despondency gradually complete the picture of a national calamity. We see all ranks involved, doctors, clergymen, merchants, the vast number of the poor; their affliction is the penalty they pay for the nation's sins, and when the cup of misery is full, when the utmost farthing has been paid in the blood and ~~tears of~~ great multitude of whom no full account exists in spite of the weekly bills, the author repeatedly reminds us, God at last delivers them from their misery, and the desolate city once more grows full. Chastened by suffering and the restoration of their Faith, people were indeed no longer capable of the frenzy of the early days of the Plague when instead of seeking God's mercy, they surrendered themselves to quacks and false prophets, but even excessive joy such as that marking the termination of the plague could bring in a new train of distress. For the people ignoring the need of further precaution against infection laid themselves open to its scourge, which, if it did not destroy them, made them suffer the most exquisite pain. The author thus urges the necessity of precaution to the last, and also of self-control whether happiness or misery is a man's lot.

We are told with an N.B. "The author of this Journal, lies buried in that very Ground, being at his own Desire, his Sister having been buried there



a few Years before⁶⁹. It is curious that the death of the supposed author should be mentioned before the story is fully told.

The Saddler carried on a good business in the city. He had no wife and children and his household consisted of servants and apprentices. He had a brother, back from Portugal, and a sister. The Saddler did not want to leave London. He was tied to his business and property, but the general panic in the city made him uncertain whether to go or stay when he had "a strong impression" that he should stay. In many ways he reminds us of De Foe himself. In fact no other character in the novels bears a stronger resemblance to him than he. To note the similarities —he was a tradesman and a Londoner like De Foe; he combined prudence with curiosity; he had a rational attitude and a faith in supernatural hints, impressions, etc. : "any Person . . . should keep his Eye upon the particular Providences which occur"⁷⁰. His dependence on God and his distaste of sectarian differences⁷¹, his interest in the poor and his project for avoiding the plague, and his mode of expressing his sense of deliverance in the following sentence, all strongly remind us of De Foe himself : "But if ten Lepers were healed, and but one return'd to give Thanks, I desire to be as that one, and to be thankful for my self"⁷². If we take and to be thankful for my self⁷². If we take into our consideration all these points, we shall be persuaded that the Saddler is a projection of De Foe

⁶⁹ A Journal of the Plague Year, p. 283.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 213-214.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 300-301 ; cp. De Foe's letter to Harley (November 9, 1703, Portland MSS, vol. IV, p. 75). De Foe wrote again to the Earl of Oxford (April 14, 1713, Portland MSS, vol. V, p. 281), "I had come, like the tenth leper, to pay my duty and acknowledgment to your Lordship . . ."

himself, and our author's known love of disguise would explain the initials H. F. at the end of the *Journal* and no theory about an uncle or other relative would be necessary to clear up the mystery.

Although the Saddler decided that he would not move to a safer place for the duration of the Plague, he was more than once shaken in his resolution, and repented of his rashness in venturing to abide in town⁷³. This vacillating state of mind arose from what he saw around him :

"the many Dismal Objects, which happened everywhere as I went about the Streets, had fill'd my Mind with a great deal of Horror, for fear of the Distemper it self, which was indeed, very horrible in it self and in some more than in others"⁷⁴.

Later on, he is more terrified still and confesses

"that I repented several times that I had venture~~d~~ to stay in Town, and had not gone away with my Brother"⁷⁵.

This tendency to sigh over some rejected course of action is also shared by Robinson Crusoe who regretted having left home and afterwards, his plantations in Brazil. The Saddler, cautious by temper, was "greatly afflicted at and very much disturb'd about" his appointment as "one of the Examiners of the Houses in the Precinct" where he lived⁷⁶ and got himself "discharg'd of the dangerous Office I was in, as soon I cou'd get another admitted, who I had obtain'd for a little Money to accept of it"⁷⁷.

The Saddler had a true Londoner's pride⁷⁸ in the great city : he reminds one of the expression,

⁷³ A *Journal of the Plague Year*, p. 93.

⁷⁴ Ibid.,

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 193.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 215.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 206.

⁷⁸ Cp. The title "Augusta Triumphans or the Way to Make London the Most Flourishing City in the

148156



"London can take it" when he says, "it was never to be said of *London*, that the living were not able to bury the Dead"⁷⁹. London in fact did more than bury its dead. The streets were swept of all sorts of unseemly things : the Lord Mayor carried on his duties as well as the Sheriffs and Aldermen. "Justice was executed in all Cases without Interruption"⁸⁰.

Brayley in his edition of the *Journal of the Plague Year* has pointed out certain inaccuracies in the statements made by De Foe. On one point the mistake is deliberate and calls for observation. It is not a fact, Brayley tells us, that the Plague ceased entirely early in 1666 as De Foe would have us believe. For in that year alone London lost by it no less than two thousand people. The infection continued in a slight form till 1679⁸¹. De Foe alters the facts in this case with his eyes open so as to suit his context of a divine Judgement upon the city. The other mistakes are entirely minor and are not worth taking any notice of. The authenticity of the account is not harmed by these slight inaccuracies. Although true as history, the *Journal* is also an example of a very high order of imagination.

Dr. Watson Nicholson has written a work entitled, "The Historical Sources of The Journal of the Plague Year" which I could not consult, the Cambridge University Library not having a copy and the British Museum Copy being destroyed by

Universe"; also, the sentence from "The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" (Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. III, p. 152) : "Our City of London has more Trade than all their (Chinese) mighty Empire."

⁷⁹ A *Journal of the Plague Year*, p. 225.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

⁸¹ A *Journal of the Plague Year* Edited by E. W. Brayley, London. George Routledge, 1882, Introduction XX.



blitz. Virginia Harlan in her article on *De Foe's Narrative Style* published in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (vol. XXX, 1931, p. 61) quotes the following remark made by Dr. Nicholson: "from the point of style and art the work (*Journal of the Plague Year*) is execrable"⁸².

As our conclusions are so widely different, I am persuaded that my failure to have access to the work is not a loss that I need regret.

⁸² Dr. Watson Nicholson, *Historical Sources of the Journal of the Plague Year*, p. 90, Boston, 1919.



CHAPTER II

ACADEMY EDUCATION: THE COMPLEAT ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

"I am of opinion¹ that the world has a very wrong notion of what they call a schollar. I think 'tis a mistake that a man can not be called a schollar unless he be master of all classick learning."

The Compleat English Gentleman, p. 199.

Professor Sutherland has described the kind of education De Foe had². We shall discuss in this chapter mainly the views of our author on education.

The formal instruction a man receives in youth does not always promote his interests and talents. For education at schools and colleges often proceeds with little reference to the aptitude of the pupil. This clearly was not the experience of De Foe, who found in his tutor, the Rev. Charles Morton at the Academy at Newington Green, a gifted teacher with progressive ideas on education. He ran his institution on modern lines, giving the pride of place not to Latin, as was then customary, but to English. He thus departed from the established practice of the time and pointed the way onwards along which De Foe, "one of the first who saw the old world through a pair of sharp modern eyes"² found it very profitable to travel. The students at this Academy all gave special attention to the study of English. There are very few direct references to it in De Foe but this was what he wrote about it in 1712, mentioning at the end of the account his

¹ Sutherland, De Foe, pp. 15-25.

² G. M. Trevelyan—England under Queen Anne, vol. I, p. 2.

own name along with those of a few others like Timothy Crusoe, Sam Wesley and Kit Battersby, as the products of the school:

"There was, some Years ago, a private Accademy of the *Dissenters* not far from *London*, the Master or Tutor of which Read all his Lectures, gave all his Systems, whether of Phylosophy or *Divinity*, in *English*, had all his Declaimings and Dissertations in the *English* Tongue. And tho' the Scholars in the Place were not Destitute in the Languages, yet it is observ'd of them, they were by this made Masters of the *English* Tongue, and more of them excelled in that Particular, than of any School at that Time"³.

Modern studies generally found favour at this school and De Foe

"seems to have had a chance, however, of receiving instruction in Latin and Greek, logic and philosophy, mathematics . . . history, geography, and political science"⁴.

De Foe's equipment in languages, whether learnt at this Academy or at a later date, was considerable. In a number of the "Review", quoted by Professor Sutherland⁵ he claims to have a close familiarity with French, Italian and Latin. De Foe added to his languages the knowledge of Spanish while he was resident in Spain at a date which he does not, however, specify⁶. In 1710 he wrote :

"I have been in my Time pretty well Master of five Languages, and have not lost them yet,

³ The Present State of the Parties, London, 1712, p. 319.

⁴ Sutherland, De Foe, p. 21.

⁵ Review, May 31, 1705, pp. 149-150; Professor Sutherland, De Foe, p. 22.

⁶ Review, January, 27, 1711.



tho' I write no Bill over my Door, or set Latin Quotations in the Front of the "Review".

De Foe's criticism of the Dissenting Academies is interesting : it shows the value he attached to conversation, and it introduces us to his quarrel with dry-as-dust scholars whose chief excellence lay in the cultivation of memory, the importance of which our author at any rate was little disposed to overrate. The academies, he observed, unlike the universities, did not possess any facility for conversation, which strengthens out the angularities of character and communicates an easy command of language :

" 'Tis evident, the great Imperfection of our Accademies is want of Conversation ; this the Publick Universities enjoy ; ours cannot : If a Man pores upon his Book, and despises the Advantage of Conversation, he always comes out a Pedant, a meer Scholar, rough and unfit for anything out of the Walls of his Colleage. Conversation polishes the Gentleman in Discourse, acquaints 'em with Men, and with Words; lets them into the Polite part of Language; gives them Stile, Accent, Delicacy, and Taste in Expression'. Many years later he drew 'the portrait of a pedant'. The faults he laid at his door would make a long list but most of them are implicit in the earlier criticism, and could be summarised as ignorance of English, and of men and things generally, with a narrow range of interests and an unimaginative outlook. The typical scholar has a sour, cynical, surly, retired temper. He does not seem to have

⁷ Review, December 16, 1710.

⁸ The Present State of the Parties, p. 316.

⁹ Quoted below in chapter VIII ; Applebee's Journal, November 6, 1725 ; Lee, vol. III, pp. 437-439.



even seen a map—he has no knowledge of modern languages—

"knows Letters . . . but knows nothing of the World,—has neither read Men nor Things."

De Foe thus finds the traditional scholar worthless on purely utilitarian grounds. Within the walls of his college he may have some use but he has little to give to the world at large. Such a specialised type of learning cannot win our author's approval. A closer approximation to the standard of excellence, as conceived by him, is reached by his "Complete Gentleman" whom he describes in the following terms :

"He has travell'd over some of the world in person and over all the rest in books. He speaks five or six languages; particularly . . . he talks Latin and French as if they were his native tongues; he is perfectly acquainted with the Customs and manners of all the nations he has been in; and yet his discourse is so modest, so grave, so Free from a noisie rattling way, which is so common in the world, that 'tis a pleasure to be in his company . . . he has the Phylosophic Transaccions allmost by heart, he has brought something in his head from every place where he has been, and has a vast memory: and then for astronomy . . . he talks of the Starrs and of the planets as if he was born there, and of their distances, motions, and revolutions, as if he had travell'd with them and knew his way back again"¹⁰.

It is noticeable in this description that De Foe does not directly insist upon a careful knowledge of English as a part of the education expected of his "Complete gentleman", though this is quite clearly implied. Knowledge serves to reinforce

¹⁰ The Compleat English Gentleman, Ed. by Karl D. Bülbding, London, 1890, pp. 191-192.



good manners and social virtues generally. The "Complete gentleman" knows astronomy and philosophy well and takes his place in society as a valued member unlike the scholar and orientalist who had little in common with the ordinary man, and found in antiquities the only things that suited their taste.

Travel and Geography profoundly interested De Foe. His library contained many books on these subjects like *Several Embassies and Voyages to Japan*, 1670, *Voyages into South America*, 1698, Wafer's *Isthmus of America*, 1699, Betagh's *Voyage Round the World*, 1728, Froger's *Voyage to Africa*, 1698, Wallace's *Account of Orkney*, 1700, etc.,¹¹. His own travels were confined to the continent of Europe; he visited France¹², Spain¹³, Portugal¹⁴, and Aix-La-Chapelle¹⁵, and also perhaps Hanover¹⁶ in Germany. Besides these places he had also been to Italy and Switzerland¹⁷. In his imagination, however, he left no part of the globe unexplored. *Robinson Crusoe* contained appropriately a map of the globe to enable readers to follow the journeyings of the "hero", and Singleton travelled across the African continent, the account of which showed a knowledge of geography, once thought by critics to anticipate important modern discoveries concerning the course of the Congo. But as Professor Secord has shown, De Foe's geography was not ahead of his

¹¹ G. A. Aitken, Catalogue of De Foe's Library, Athenaeum, June 1, 1895.

¹² G. D. H. Cole's Edition of the Tour, Letter III, vol. I.

¹³ Review, January 27, 1711.

¹⁴ Oldmixon, History of England III, -519; Wilson, De Foe, vol. I, p. 208.

¹⁵ Cole's Edition of "Tour" vol. II, p. 573.

¹⁶ Portland MSS, vol. IV, p. 89.

¹⁷ Tour, vol. II, p. 466.

time and in his survey of Africa, he was but following the majority of map-makers¹⁸. Crūsoe in *The Farther Adventures* travels from Bengal to China and returns to Europe by overland route through Russia. His geography is not always accurate¹⁹ but it was a subject of unfailing interest for him; he always coupled it with the study of history. What he thought of history and geography would appear from the approach to the subjects suggested in the following remarks :

"The studious geographer and the well read historian travells with not this or that navigator or traveller, marches with not this or that generall, or making this or that campaign, but he keeps them all company; he marches with Hannibal over the Alps into Italy, and with Caesar into Gaul and into Britain, with Belisarius into Africa, and with Emperor Honorius into Persia. He fights the battle of Granicus with Alexander, and of Actium with Augustus; he is at the overthro' of the great Bajazette by Tamerlain, and of Tomombejus and his Mamaluks by Selymus; he sees the battle of Lepanto, with the defeat of the Spanish Armada with Drake; with Adrian he views the whole Roman Empire and, in a word, the whole world; he discovers America with Columbus, conquers it with the great Cortez, and replunders it with Sir Francis Drake"²⁰.

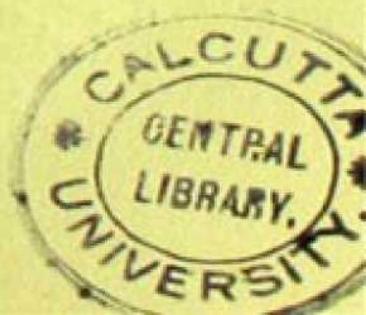
These subjects are also the favourites of De Foe's Cavalier who wrote :

"my chief reading was upon History and Geography, as that which pleased my Mind best, and supplied me with Ideas most suitable to my Genius : By one I understood what great Actions

¹⁸ A. W. Secord—Studies in the Narrative Method of De Foe, The University of Illinois, 1924, p 136.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 144 f.

²⁰ The Compleat English Gentleman, p. 226.





had been done in the World ; and by the other I understood where they had been done”²¹.

Colonel Jack gives a list of the books he had read²² and it is curious to notice that they are all histories. Earlier in life Jack acquired a considerable knowledge of recent history by conversation with soldiers and seamen who had taken direct part in various campaigns²³. Thus it appears that neither in travel nor in reading would De Foe approve of an attitude of passive receptivity. He wants the learner to exercise all his faculties ; to be keenly observant when he travels and use his imagination when he reads his books. Memorising facts or learning them mechanically does not enter his programme. He indicates the right approach to history—it is to live it in imagination—and the proper way to study geography is to have the experience of seeing things. In other words, the student has to bring a good deal to his reading before he can get the best out of it. His *Journal of the Plague Year* and *Memoirs of a Cavalier* undoubtedly attest this power of entering into the spirit of past times and remote places. Another important point to notice in connexion with De Foe’s characters is that, however poor or abandoned, they have a genuine respect for knowledge which they are often at great pains to acquire. Colonel Jack strove to teach himself the rudiments of knowledge in the sordid surroundings of his boyhood and in the days of his comparative pros-

²¹ *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, p. 2, Shakespeare Head Edition.

²² Colonel Jack , vol. I, p. 189, Shakespeare Head Edition. The list contains the following titles : “*Livy's Roman History*, the *History of the Turks*, the *English History of Speed* and others ; the *History of Low Country Wars*, the *History of Gustavus Adolphus*, King of Sweden, and the *History of the Spaniard's Conquest of Mexico*.

²³ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 10.

perity in Virginia he placed himself under the instruction of a convict who happened to be a scholar²⁴. Singleton knew Latin and a little Portuguese but was inspired by the Gunner who

"was an excellent Mathematician, a good Scholar, and a compleat Sailor"²⁵, to aim at higher things, and he was filled with "an insatiable Thirst after Learning in general" although his specific ambition was to become "a compleat Sailor"²⁶. Roxana "learnt the English Tongue perfectly well"²⁷ and she snatched time from her pleasures to learn Turkish and Italian²⁸ when she was on a visit to Italy as mistress of the French Prince. Moll Flanders "learn'd by Imitation and Enquiry" all that the daughters of her rich hostess "learn'd by Instruction and Direction." She thus learned to dance, to speak French, to sing and to play upon the harpsichord or spinnet²⁹. The English Scholar in *Captain Singleton* who lived among the negroes possessed a knowledge of mathematics, Latin, French and Italian³⁰. Robinson Crusoe

"got a competent Knowledge of the Mathe-
matics and the Rules of Navigation, learn'd
how to keep an Account of the Ship's Course,
take an Observation; and in short, to under-
stand some things that were needed to be
understood by a Sailor"³¹.

²⁴ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 190.

²⁵ Captain Singleton, p. 68.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

²⁷ The Fortunate Mistress, Shakespeare Head Edition,
vol. I, p. 2.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

²⁹ Moll Flanders, Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. I,
p. 13.

³⁰ Captain Singleton, p. 149.

³¹ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 18.



true eloquence to which he attributed great powers :

"How by the irresistible Power of good Language the prejudices of the worst Enemies are removed, and the affections of Friends roused in favour of the Causes which we plead; for who can resist the force of sound, harmonious, well-placed Words? 'Song charms the Sense, but Eloquence the Soul' ".

De Foe's *Complete Gentleman* is modest, sociable and grave; he is pleasant in his discourse, quite unlike the surly, snappish scholar, little used to company. Our author who had heard a good deal of ill-mannered language freely bandied about in his day, sometimes at his own cost, included good manners as an essential element in his conception of a man of polite learning as distinguished from "a meer schollar." As he says

"the first is a gentleman and what a gentleman should be: the last is a meer book-case, a bundle of letters, a head stufft with the jargon of languages, a man that understands every body but is understood by no body, a creature buried aliv in heaps of antients and moderns, full of tongues but no language, all sence but wit, in a word, all learning and no manners".

In his passages at arms with his contemporaries, De Foe, true to his teaching, usually showed considerable restraint of temper. Swift spoke of him with contempt³⁶. But our author, remembering the injury, does not yet use intemperate language:

*"With my Humble Service to Mr. Examiner,
I recommend it to him, to answer this Civil*

³⁶ Applebee's Journal, May 29, 1725, Lee, vol. III, p. 387.

³⁷ The Complete English Gentleman, p. 203.

³⁸ Swift called him an illiterate scribbler in "Examiner" No. 15. Sutherland, De Foe, f.n., p. 185.

Question—*If, Sir; you have so much Learning, how came you to have so little Manners?*³⁹

In the next number of the "Review" he returns to the attack but though he uses satirical language, he does not descend to the scurrilities of expression which even the learned did not hesitate to employ :

"I have had the Honour to Fight a Rascal, but never could Master the Eloquence of calling a Man so ; nor am I yet arriv'd to the Dignity of being Laureated at her Majesty's Bear-Garden"⁴⁰.

De Foe repeatedly expressed his abhorrence of cursing and scurrilous language⁴¹. His characters, outcasts as they mostly are, do not indulge in swearing or indecent words. Colonel Jack tells us :

"I never us'd any ill Words, no Body ever heard me swear"⁴².

On one occasion he heard a wealthy gentleman who came to buy glass-bottles swear

"most horrible Oaths at every two or three Words . . . the Master of the Glass, an antient grave Gentleman, took the liberty to reprove him . . . you swear so and take God's Name in vain so, that I cannot bear to stay with you, I would rather you would let my Goods alone, and go some where else, I hope you won't take it ill, but I don't desire to deal with any Body that does so, I am afraid my Glass-house should fall on your Head while you stay in it"⁴³.

Years later Colonel Jack remembered the reproof and it influenced his conduct while he tried to arrive at his ideal of a gentleman.

³⁹ Review, December 14, 1710, p. 450.

⁴⁰ Review, December 16, 1710, p. 455.

⁴¹ Essay on Projects, Hazlitt, vol. III.

⁴² Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 71.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 71-72.



De Foe thought it necessary to test the capacities of the pupil before launching him upon a course of studies with a view to a career. So he wrote :

"'tis no doubt, the proper Duty of Parents . . . to study the Capacities, the Temper, the Inclination, and the Common Gifts of their Children, in their designing them for Employment in the World'"⁴⁴.

The aptitude of the learner should be a vital consideration :

"Give a Fool Learning, you make him a *Rake*, a *Fop*, and at last quite a *Lunatick*. Letters, like fine cloaths, let them be never so well made, so gay, or so rich, they will never make the Man Genteel, if he has no Shapes'"⁴⁵.

Another special need for the student is to realize that he lacks knowledge which will give point to his quest for it :

"there is no learning any thing till we are humble enough to see we want teaching'"⁴⁶.

This attitude goes with a true zeal for learning. Singleton, for instance, had

"an earnest Desire after learning every thing that could be taught me'"⁴⁷.

Robinson Crusoe's teacher, the Captain, found pleasure in teaching—a basic qualification for the teacher—and the pupil found pleasure in learning—

"as he took Delight to introduce me, I took Delight to learn'"⁴⁸.

Thus willingness and the capacity to learn are both necessary. Colonel Jack was

⁴⁴ The Present State of Parties, pp. 298-299.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 301.

⁴⁶ The Compleat English Gentleman, p. 194.

⁴⁷ Captain Singleton, p. 68.

⁴⁸ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 18.

"willing enough, and capable too, to learn any Thing, if he had had any, but the Devil for his School-Master"⁴⁹.

He sought knowledge with great earnestness, "was always upon the Inquiry, asking Questions of Things done in Publick as well as in Private"⁵⁰.

For De Foe there can be no substitute for education. If the poor are reduced to the level of the beast without it, the rich are no better off in its absence. How unhappily mean and wretched does it render the poor if they

"kno' nothing and are capable of learning nothing any otherwise than the horses they driv may learn to kno' the names they giv them, and which way to turn when they are call'd to!"⁵¹

The self educated Lord whose story is told at length in *The Compleat English Gentleman* to suggest that riches and rank can never be a substitute for learning, spoke with conviction when he strongly repudiated the view that a man in his station of life did not have any occasion for books and learning :

"must we be curs'd with ignorance because we are advanc'd in rank, be made fools because we have money? . . . Are lords made for sport to the world?"⁵²

He proceeds to compare himself with the stag in his park :

"I am a very happy fool. Why, a stagg in my park is just such a noble, happy creature as I am. He lyes all the heat of the day stretch't

⁴⁹ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵¹ Of Royal Educacion, Edited by Karl D. Böllring, London, 1895, p. 8.

⁵² The Compleat English Gentleman, p. 155.



out in the cover, as I do upon my Couch : enjoys his full ease and the uttmost satisfaction ; . . . he is proud, haughty, fierce, tyranicall, and to sum up all most compleatly ignorant, and therefore wonderfull happy”⁵³.

The Lord finally asks :

“Can they giv’ an equivalent ? What is an estate to the entail of wisdome and knowledge ?”⁵⁴

No wonder that the outcasts De Foe painted, even where they lacked everything, were never destitute of a feeling of respect for knowledge which they strove to acquire within the limited opportunities open to them.

The classical and oriental scholars had very few utilitarian ends guiding them in their labours but De Foe’s view of education is dominated by the idea of the advantages that issue from it. Not the least of them is its restraining influence upon the youth who may otherwise be led astray and plunge into infinite mischief. In the Preface to *Colonel Jack* he wrote :

“HERE’S Room for just and copious Observations, on the Blessing, and Advantages of a sober and well-govern’d Education, and the Ruin of so many Thousands of all Ranks in this Nation, for want of it here ; also we may see how much publick Schools and Charities might be improved to prevent the Destruction of so many unhappy Children, as, in this Town, are every Year bred up for the Executioner”⁵⁵:

De Foe seemed very sensibly to hold that the ideas of good and evil are not implanted in us by Nature

⁵³ The Compleat English Gentleman, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁵ Colonel Jack, Preface, vol. I, p. vii.

but that they come by nurture, and so Colonel Jack, not having the necessary instruction for opening his eyes and teaching him to make the elementary distinction,

"look'd on picking Pockets as a Trade, and thought I was to go Apprentice to it"⁵⁶.

One effect of a well-regulated instruction is to stimulate the moral fibre and so the Minister of the parish which had charge of Singleton in his boyhood told him

"that tho' I was but a poor Boy, if I minded my Book, and served God, I might make a good Man"⁵⁷.

Besides these advantages which relate principally to morality, De Foe thought also of education as a stepping stone to a successful career. As the gunner told Singleton :

"to be ignorant, was to be certain of a mean Station in the World, but that Knowledge was the first Step to Preferment"⁵⁸. •

In fact whether one desired to be a "Complete Sailor", a "Complete Tradesman", or a "Complete Gentleman", one could not do without knowledge. Thus the various professions call for knowledge which is by no means the scholar's monopoly. Even pickpockets and thieves stood in need of instruction for the successful management of their lawless trades. Thus an expert thief took Colonel Jack under his wing, inviting him to "take a walk with him", and promising

"that after he had made me capable, I should set up for my self if I pleas'd"⁵⁹.

Similarly Moll Flanders learned her mystery from her friend, the Midwife, who

⁵⁶ Colonel Jack, Preface, vol. I, p. 20.

⁵⁷ Captain Singleton, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁹ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 19.



"gave me such Directions, and I so well follow'd them, that I grew the greatest Artist of my time"⁶⁰.

De Foe thus shows the bearing of knowledge upon the immediate concerns of life. Wedded to living interests he could say :

"antiquity is not my work"⁶¹.

His "Cavalier" also disclaims interest in the subject in words that echo his own :

"I had no Gust to Antiquities"⁶².

One reason which made our author so determinedly turn away from antiquarianism is a tendency in its votaries to belittle the present while he himself, if he did not actually tend to magnify it, saw it at any rate in its all-absorbing aspects—as a series of urgent and insistent problems in the solution of which he had laboured so indefatigably.

We had noticed above what De Foe thought of the value of education and its effect upon the individual. We may now proceed to see if knowledge, whether acquired at the Newington-Green Academy or in the school of experience had any influence on his character and attitude as man and author. For this purpose we may fill in a few more details so as to complete the account of his learning. He himself said with more humility than truth that he made "no great pretence to Books"⁶³. He was, as may be supposed, a man of wide interests to which testimony is borne by the catalogue of books

"of the late ingenious Daniel De Foe, Gent., lately deceas'd",

⁶⁰ Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 29.

⁶¹ G. D. H. Cole's Edition of "Tour", vol. I, p. 257.

⁶² Memoirs of a Cavalier, p. 30.

⁶³ "Review", May 22, 1705, p. 133, Facsimile Book No. 4.



published in *The Daily Advertiser* for November 13, 1731. The subjects mentioned are..•

"History and Antiquities of divers Nations, several hundred curious, scarce tracts on Parliamentary Affairs, Politics, Husbandry, Trade, Voyages, Natural History, Mines, Minerals, etc."⁶⁴.

His library also contained works by Moore, Overbury, Addison, Pope, and Locke (whose influence on him is prominently illustrated by the Dedication of his *Jure Divino* to Lady Reason)⁶⁵. Reference has already been made to the books on travels, etc., contained in his Collection. De Foe's attitude to the reading public is different from that of Pope, who had committed the critical indiscretion of including him in the *Dunciad*. De Foe published in the *Review* in 1711 a long disquisition on dullness in which he upholds the dignity of letters, attributing dullness rather to the reader than the author :

"Whether this DULLNESS, tho' charg'd upon the Author, is not rather to be found in the Reader"⁶⁶.

Three outstanding things in De Foe's attitude are his love of accuracy, his moderation, and his scientific or rational temper. He does not usually tamper with facts and shows considerable honesty in representing them⁶⁷. His *Remarkable Passage of an Apparition*, *The Storm* and the *Apparition*

⁶⁴ Notes and Queries, February, 17, 1866.

⁶⁵ Hazlitt's Edition of De Foe's works, vol. III, See, Daniel De Foe : An Artist in the Puritan Tradition by Rudolf G. Stamm in the Philological Quarterly, July, 1936, p. 228, vol. XV.

⁶⁶ Review, August 18, 1711, p. 254.

⁶⁷ See, however, the Preface.



of Mrs. Veal may now be cited as evidence of his honesty, and not of his lying habit as they were once thought to be. The *Journal of the Plague Year* is a document marked equally by veracity and imagination. If his two apparitions are not actually "a lob of spirits", there is nothing strange or exciting about them. Their stories are told without any deviation from the accounts current at the time they were supposed to have revisited the earth. De Foe could easily have written "thrillers" by editing his material but he chose to adhere to the pedestrian details, probably because he wanted to preserve interesting data for future investigation. The *Journal of the Plague Year* again is an accurate picture of what actually happened. He was here inspired with the desire of presenting to his contemporaries the account of a divine Judgement upon a whole people for their sins, and it was essential to his conception of his responsibility in this undertaking that he should not depart from the known facts unless by so doing he could bring home to his readers the more vividly his conviction that the Plague was indeed a Judgement. An honest temper, meticulously careful in regard to every fact, which seems to be weighed before it is set down—such is the impression we receive when we read his accounts of various kinds of happenings. Robinson Crusoe, for example, is greatly comforted by the assurance in Scripture,

"Wait on the Lord, and be of good Cheer, and he shall strengthen thy Heart"

which were the first words he read on opening the Bible after a prayer for his deliverance. He then proceeds to tell how he felt about the hopeful message contained in the verse :

"It is impossible to express the Comfort this gave me. In Answer, I thankfully laid down



the Book, and was no more sad, *at least, not on that Occasion*"⁶⁸.

The portion underlined will serve to show the precision he tried to attain. He was sometimes at incredible pains to ascertain facts for describing some important event with all possible accuracy. One such occasion was provided by the storm of 1703, long believed to have taken place when he was in prison at Newgate; but since the publication of the *Portland MSS* the date of his release has been known to have preceded that of the *Storm*—

"tho' I had, my self, the Curiosity to count the Number of Trees, in a Circuit I rode, over most part of Kent, in which being tired with the Number, I left off reckoning after I had gone on to 17000"⁶⁹.

The desire to secure accuracy and precision in the use of terms appears in the opening words of "*The Compleat English Gentleman*" :

"Before I enter too far into this nice Subject, 'tis necessary, for keeping all clear about me, that I should explain my Terms; that I may have no Dispute about Words, no Mists and Fogs to disperse as I go on"⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 182; attention to this sentence has been called by James Moffat in "The Religion of Robinson Crusoe", published in The Contemporary Review for June, 1919, vol. CXV, pp. 666-667.

⁶⁹ The Storm, London, 1704, p. 70.

⁷⁰ The Compleat English Gentleman, p. 11. See also "Realism in Daniel De Foe's Narratives of Adventure" by Gerridina Roorda (1929) p. 1. The same desire to attain precision in the use of terms also appears in "The Complete English Tradesman" (Oxford 1841, vol. 17, p. 1) where he writes: "Being to direct the discourse to the tradesmen of this nation, it is needful in a few words to explain who it is we are to understand by the word "tradesman", and how he is to be qualified in order to merit the title of "Complete".



His careful topography, particularly in "Colonel Jack" and "Moll Flanders" may also be regarded as a further evidence of his desire for accuracy. One example may be noted to illustrate this and also the graphic use to which his topography is put. After robbing the Collier Master, Jack's comrade told him to run for his life and he followed the instruction :

"never resting, or scarce looking about me, till we got quite up into *Fenchurch-Street*, thro' *Lime-Street*, into *Leaden-hall-Street*, down *St. Mary-Axe*, to *London-Wall*, then through *Bishopgate*, and down old *Bedlam* into *Moor-fields*"⁷¹.

The next important element in De Foe's attitude was his moderation. He engaged in many controversies in his life and had often to face fierce denunciations as a result of his frank and fearless criticisms. But it is rare to see him lose his mental equilibrium in the storm that broke over his head, threatening sometimes to overpower him. He himself indicated the moderation which he both taught and practised :

"In all my Writings, as well as in this Paper, it has been my Endeavour, and ever shall be I hope, to steer the middle Way between all our Extremes, and while I am applauding the Beauty and Lustre of Temper and Moderation to practice it my self"⁷².

Finally, we shall proceed to notice the scientific or rational element which characterises De Foe's attitude. A scientific temper, it may be observed, is not always a guarantee of freedom from errors but we recognise its presence when we see it applied to experience. In his *Tour* De Foe mentions four

⁷¹ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 50.

⁷² Review, January, 17, 1708, p. 583.

springs which stood in close proximity to each other. Their water, however, had very different taste and invited by his landlord at Knaresborough to share his surprise at what he held to be an unaccountable phenomenon, De Foe responded with a question which showed his scientific approach :

"Is it not strange, Sir, said I, that in *Darbyshire* two Springs, one hot, and another cold, should rise within a Hand's breadth of one another? 'Tis certain, that though the eruption of the Water may be near, yet the subterranean Passages may be as remote as East and West, and the Mineral lying in Veins may run remote also, so as to take off all the Wonder"⁷³.

In the *Tour* he often quotes Camden as an authority on matters of antiquarian interest, and does not usually criticise him for his views so far as the subject is concerned. But where common sense is outraged by his credulity, De Foe is ready to challenge the historian :

"Mr. Cambden relates", he writes in the *Tour*, "that on the Coast of this Country, a great piece of *Amber* was driven on Shore by the Force of the Sea, as big, to use his own Words, as a Horse. I shall add nothing to the Story because 'tis hard to give Credit to it; it is enough that I name my Author, for I could not learn from the Inhabitants that they saw any more of it"⁷⁴.

⁷³ G. D. H. Cole's Edition of the "Tour", vol. II,
p. 619.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 813.



CHAPTER III

THE COMPLETE ENGLISH TRADESMAN

" . . . Let them imagine they see the Poor Woman, as the Person who carried her the Charity did, the Mother sitting on the Floor in Despair, and in all the Extremities of an Ungovern'd Rage, tearing her Hair from her Head, and three little Innocent Babes Crying round her for Bread : let them consider her a Woman Well Bred, Well Taught, but Helpless and Friendless ; for my part, the Distress of it confounds my Pen, and I can say no more of it than this ; God Almighty, whose Pity and Compassion is Infinite and Unbounded, encline those to whom his Bounty has been more Extensive, to consider that the Poor are a Rent Charge upon the Rich. . . ."

Review, Tuesday, February 20, 1705, p. 418.

De Foe put a good deal of his personal experience into *The Complete English Tradesman*. He wrote it in a reminiscent mood. The disasters of his life lay remote from him and their memory was mellowed by the interval of time. He could now weigh matters and offer his views impartially. He had been in trade for many years and had dealt in a variety of commodities with overseas connexions. As he knew well, the tradesman often suffered from sharp changes of fortune. How should he behave when he was driven to despair by a serious setback in his affairs ? The answer De Foe gives reads like a passage out of his own biography :

"When he (the tradesman) is dispirited, or discouraged by crosses and disappointments, and ready to lie down and despair, the very sight of his family rouses him again, and he flies to his business with a new vigour : I must

follow my business, says he, or we must all starve; my poor children must perish”¹.

De Foe had in fact often been buffeted by fortune and it was by hard struggle that he maintained his foothold in the world. He speaks of early disasters and frequent turns of his affairs which

“have left me incumbered with an insupportable weight of Debt”².

and adds,

“I have some time ago summ'd up the Scenes of my life in this Distich.

“No Man has tasted differing Fortunes More,
And Thirteen Times I have been Rich
and Poor.”

Nearly sixty-seven years old now, he could look back on the past dispassionately and if he spoke of the collapse of a great business, he did so as a detached observer and not as one whose fortunes were at stake :

“A great tradesman, like a great tree in a thick wood, if he falls, he is sure to crush a great deal of the underwood which lies within the reach of his boughs and branches. A young tradesman miscarries and it reaches but a little way : a few creditors are affected, and some hurt is done ; but if the overgrown tradesman falls, he shakes the exchange, as we call it ; he pulls down here half a dozen, and there half a score ; and they pull down others, and, like rolling ninepins, they tumble down one another”³.

¹ The Complete English Tradesman (Oxford, 1841), vol. XVII, p. 84.

² Preface to the “Review”, vol. VIII, 1711 : Facsimile Book No. 19.

³ Professor Sutherland has drawn attention to the passage : De Foe, p. 33. The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVIII, p. 84.



Our author was out of the wood himself, and his attitude is marked by artistic detachment. It may be well to remember that by the date at which the second volume of his *Tradesman* was published (1727), all his novels were already in print.

A contemporary pamphlet gibes at De Foe's disasters in business :

"He has run through the three degrees of Comparison, Pos. as a *Hosier*; Compar. as a *Civet-Cat Merchant*; and Super. as a *Pantile Merchant*".

The civet-cat episode was a highly discreditable affair. He defrauded his Mother-in-law by the supposed sale to her of 75 civet-cats, shortly before his bankruptcy in 1692. After this it is no easy task to rehabilitate his honour. Some of his remarks, though made without a personal context, evidently bear on this circumstance in his life :

"For I must always be allowed to say, that absolute necessity too often forces distressed tradesmen to do things which they are penitents for to the last hour of their lives, and which their very souls abhorred in the doing".

There might be demurrs among people who had never had to face his ordeal, whose records were clean because their experiences were pleasant ; and De Foe would ask them :

"was you ever tried ? was you ever distressed to make payment, and did not promise without a prospect ? was you ever in prison, and

* Observations on the Bankrupts' Bill, 1706 ; Theodore F. M. Newton—"The Civet-Cats of Newington Green : New Light on De Foe" in "The Review of English Studies", January, 1937, p. 10.

^a *Tradesman*, vol. XVIII, p. 128 ; also see vol. XVII, p. 131.

would not make use of another man's money intrusted with you, to fetch you out?"⁶

Experience showed him that

"Breaking is the death of a tradesman; he is mortally stabbed, or, as we may say, shot through the head, in his trading capacity; his shop is shut up, as it is when a man is buried; his credit, the life and blood of his trade, is stagnated; and his attendance, which was the pulse of his business, is stopped, and beats no more".

The bankrupt in his extremity rarely found any accommodating spirit in his creditors to alleviate his distress. On the other hand, they were a ruthless tribe, and as De Foe observed, the barbarities practised in England upon the unfortunate debtors exceeded

"Racks, Inquisitions, Tortures and Galleys". The creditors seemed to have been filled with a kind of Sadistic cruelty, being

"rather enclin'd to Punish themselves, and the Debtors too, than recover their Debts". De Foe was, however, more fortunate in his own creditors, who seem to have been made of a different metal. He tells us that the remarkable compassion of some of them made his trouble much less serious than it might have been¹⁰.

In March 1709, the number of bankrupts, according to De Foe's computation, was 80,000. He suggested that the vast number of families that

⁶ Tradesman, vol. XVIII, pp. 131-132.

⁷ Ibid., vol. XVII, p. 47.

⁸ The Review, April 26, 1707, p. 131 ; Facsimile Book No. 9.

⁹ Review, February, 14, 1706, p. 77 ; Facsimile Book No. 6.

¹⁰ The Review, Preface to vol. VIII ; Facsimile Book No. 19.



lay languishing and perishing, bound hand and foot from labour and industry, should receive attention from consideration equally of charity and policy. Many who were confined to the debtor's prison would willingly choose rather to die than to continue as they were.

"Death is not half so terrible, as a lingring, starving Confinement, without Bread or liberty"¹¹.

What made De Foe specially indignant was that while tyranny in every form was condemned by his countrymen, they should let creditors oppress their poor victims without restraint :

"With the greatest Tranquillity we can surrender the unhappy Debtor to the merciless Lust of an exasperated Creditor, which is, to use the Language of Scripture, *a meer delivering him up to the Tormentors*"¹².

There are court pardons, acts of clemency and the like for every form of crime, but for debt, he goes on to observe :

"the Gaol is like Hell, from whence there is no Redemption"¹³.

The state of things could not be easily remedied. He appealed to creditors to practise greater humanity : for they too might some day be reduced to the position of a supplicant.

"I have often seen the outrageous creditor become bankrupt himself in a little time, and begging the same mercy of others, which, just before, he had denied to his own debtor, and making the same fruitless exclamations at the

¹¹ Review, March 3, 1709, p. 581.

¹² Mist's Journal, December 28, 1717 ; Lee vol. II, p. 10.

¹³ Ibid., Lee, vol. II, p. 11.

cruelty and hard-heartedness of others to him”¹⁴.

Suitable legislation was of course the most obvious remedy and it came, De Foe contributing to it, rather curiously, a clause which guaranteed the interests of the creditor against a dishonest bankrupt :

“I assure you, (I have) been the only person who actually formed, drew up, and first proposed that very clause to the house of commons, which made it felony to the bankrupt to give in a false account”¹⁵.

This shows that he was no sentimentalist. He had esteem for the bankrupt who, like himself¹⁶, paid his creditors in full when good fortune returned to him as a reward of diligence. Bankruptcy does not, however, necessarily mean the end of a business career or the hopes of wordly success. De Foe’s attitude is thoroughly optimistic :

“Upon the whole, the English tradesman, though unfortunate, is a kind of phoenix, who rises out of his own ashes, and, if he is prudent, makes the ruin of his fortunes a firm foundation to build his recovery upon; and I know no man that sinks with greater hope, and rises again with greater advantage, than he”¹⁷.

The extreme solicitation shown by De Foe on behalf of his debtors in the *Review* and elsewhere reminds us of his own early disasters. They made him sympathise warmly with those who had a similar ordeal to face. Roxana in *The Fortunate*

¹⁴ The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 118.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁶ Sutherland, De Foe, p. 44.

¹⁷ The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVIII, p. 131.



Mistress declares that sympathy born of suffering never fails :

"When a poor Debtor, having lain long in the Compter, or *Ludgate*, or the *King's Bench*, for Debt, afterwards gets out, rises again in the World, and grows rich; such a one is a certain Benefactor to the Prisoners there, and perhaps to every Prison he passes by, as long as he lives; for he remembers the dark Days of his own Sorrow"¹⁸.

But others without the experience could still feel the sympathy imaginatively if they had had a due sense of God's mercy upon them, as Roxana goes on to suggest—

"and even those who never had the Experience of such Sorrows to stir up their Minds to Acts of Charity, would have the same charitable good Disposition, did they as sensibly remember what it is, that distinguishes them from others by a more favourable and merciful Providence."

De Foe often wrote on Poverty, which he regarded as an undiluted evil. But it is only poverty which is next door to starvation that he condemned. For poverty accompanied by honest exertion and contentment he had nothing but respect and admiration. He tells us the story in the "Tour" of a woman who lived with her three children and husband, a worker in lead mines, in a cave among the mountains. The husband earned 5d. a day in the mines and the wife, when she had the time, added to this 3d. a day by "washing the oar." But their cave was kept clean and they themselves were strong and healthy. The woman said, she was very happy; for her husband

¹⁸ *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. II, pp. 66-67.

"worked very hard, and they wanted for nothing that he could do for them"¹⁹.

The story of the poor waterman, told in *A Journal of the Plague Year*²⁰, also shows honest labour which just succeeded in keeping the wolf from the door, and it arouses the author's admiration. The Gentlewoman's husband in *The Fortunate Mistress* who takes upon himself to support Roxana's children, left at his door, indicates the duties and responsibilities towards the deserving poor when he says :

"Charity is a Duty to the Poor, and *He that gives to the Poor, lends to the Lord*; . . . we are none of us in so bad Circumstances but we are able to spare a Mite for the Fatherless"²¹.

De Foe never represents poverty as silently working the ruin of an upprotesting victim. All moral standards break down under its pressure. Was it not so when he sold the civet-cats ! In fact, as Amy in *The Fortunate Mistress* remarks,

"Honesty is out of the Question when Starvation is the Case"²².

It is an evil which gives rise to other evils, and is equally baneful whether it is actual or merely apprehended. So Moll Flanders becomes a whore and continues to be one because of the dread of being poor again :

"Poverty brought me into it, so fear of Poverty kept me in it"²³.

Reflecting on her past, she sees how much mischief came to her through her early destitution. It brought her into

¹⁹ G. D. H. Cole's Edition—"Tour", vol. II, p. 570.

²⁰ A Journal of the Plague Year, pp. 129-136.

²¹ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, pp. 22-23.

²² Ibid., p. 29.

²³ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 125.



"a Course of Life, scandalous in itself, and which in its ordinary Course, tended to the swift Destruction both of Soul and Body"²⁴.

She was goaded to crime by her poverty, and had no choice before her.

"the prospect of my own Starving, which grew every Day more frightful to me, harden'd my Heart by Degrees"²⁵.

Roxana also had a grim experience of poverty with her five children to support—

"in a word, all was Misery and Distress, the Face of Ruin was everywhere to be seen; we had eaten up almost everything, and little remain'd, unless, like one of the pitiful Women of *Jerusalem*, I should eat up my very Children themselves"²⁶.

Singleton starved :

"I knew not where to get a Bit of Bread"²⁷, and the ship's dog stole a piece of meat for him as his dinner²⁸.

The picture of the misery in the various novels is vivid and has often an intimate touch, reminding us that the author himself had drunk to the lees the same bitter cup and that there were few things in this state of which he did not know at first hand. As represented by him, poverty is an evil escaped by dint of stealing and whoredom : the perpetrators of these vices, not blind to the evil to which they have been driven, base their reform upon the consciousness of guilt, and at the end, we find

²⁴ *Moll Flanders*, vol. I, p. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 6.

²⁶ *The fortunate Mistress*, vol. I, p. 16.

²⁷ *Captain Singleton*, p. 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

that out of evil cometh good. "Vice," Moll Flanders said,

"came in always at the Door of Necessity, not at the Door of Inclination"²⁹.

and although avarice sometimes entered the picture, prolonging the wicked career, the sin for which poverty is responsible always comes to an end in the novels of De Foe. Thus his characters are goaded to a shameful life by poverty, and they reform when this scourge is removed. As soon as they have a sufficiency of money to fall back upon, they set their faces to an honest life, and are able finally to achieve it. This is the basic fact in the careers of Colonel Jack, Singleton, Moll Flanders, and, to a less extent, of Roxana. Their sins are not of their seeking; for these people are only the victims of a social disorder. Their culpability accordingly is small, and their conversion, depending as it does on external circumstances, is unattended by any serious spiritual struggle such as the process may be supposed to entail.

Beggars and people who shirk work are not included by De Foe in the ranks of the poor :

"The poverty of *England* does not lye among the craving Beggars but among poor Families, where the Children are numerous, and where Death or Sickness has depriv'd them of the Labour of the Father"³⁰.

He does not believe that beggars deserve any assistance, as will appear from this piece of deliberate exaggeration :

"As for the craving Poor . . . if they were

²⁹ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 135.

³⁰ Giving Alms no Charity included in the Volume, "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" (Shakespeare Head Edition), p. 167; Review, April 5, 1705, p. 54.



Incorporated, they would be the richest Society in the Nation”³¹.

De Foe held that indolence is both the cause and effect of poverty :

“People tell us that Slothfulness begets Poverty, and it is true; but I must add too, that Poverty makes Slothfulness”³².

He was himself by his character and interest in trade and commerce, an enemy of idleness. Crusoe in his third year in the island remarks :

“in General it may be observ’d, That I was very seldom idle”³³.

Idleness was the utter aversion of Dickery Cronke³⁴. De Foe’s poor are never idle. On the Crusoe island there were three slothful men among the ship’s rebels and the author took care to show that they were a nuisance to the settled life of the small community growing up there³⁵. De Foe held :

“The diligent hand makes rich”³⁶.

It is essential to the tradesman’s success :

“a diligent tradesman ought never to despair. And truly diligence is so absolutely necessary

³¹ Giving Alths no Charity included in the Volume, “The Shortest Way with the Dissenters” (Shakespeare Head Edition), p. 167; Review, April 5, 1705, p. 54.

³² “Tour”, vol. II, p. 734.

³³ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 131.

³⁴ Dickery Cronke, Novels and Miscellaneous Works, Oxford, 1841, vol. 19, p. 11.

³⁵ This is the view expressed on these three men and their two industrious compatriots: “The Diligent liv’d well and comfortably, and the Slothful liv’d hard and beggarly, and so I believe, generally speaking, it is all over the world” Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 193 (Farther Adventures).

³⁶ The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVIII, p. 126, c.p. Robinson Crusoe (Farther Adventures). vol. II, p. 193.

to a tradesman's 'prosperity, that without it he ought never to hope'”³⁷.

The tradesman cannot be diligent unless he can put his heart into his business :

"To delight in business is making business pleasant and agreeable, and such a tradesman cannot but be diligent in it”³⁸.

Later he observes :

"The tradesman that does not delight in his family, will never long delight in his business”³⁹.

He must supervise his business personally and maintain discipline among his apprentices whom he can trust only within certain limits, never allowing them to take his place in his shop.

Trade is a jealous mistress and will not tolerate any diversions if they serve to draw a man away to other interests :

" . . . to the tradesman no pleasure or diversion can be innocent if it injures his business, or takes either his time, his mind, his delight, or his attendance from that”⁴⁰.

The Brewer in *The Fortunate Mistress* lost his business by wasting his time in hunting while his brewery lay neglected ; he

"kept his Horses and Men, rode every Day out to the Forest a-hunting, and nothing was done all this while; but the money decreas'd apace”⁴¹.

³⁷ The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVIII, p. 126.

³⁸ Ibid., vol. XVII, p. 35.

³⁹ Ibid., vol. XVII, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

⁴¹ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 8.



Extravagance is another fruitful cause of ruin :

"Expensive living feeds upon the life and the blood of the tradesman, for it eats into the two most essential branches of his trade, namely, his credit and his cash"⁴².

The linen-draper husband of Moll Flanders came to grief in this way ; he

"fell into such a profusion of Expence, that all I had, and all he had, would not have held out above one Year . . . in about two Years and a Quarter he Broke"⁴³.

De Foe tells us rather mournfully that

"good husbandry and frugality are quite out of fashion"⁴⁴.

Sir Robert Clayton in *The Fortunate Mistress* speaks of the prevailing fashion in the middle and upper classes of living beyond one's means and suggests with what advantage a due^e measure of economy could be practised by them :

"if the Gentlemen of England would but act so (save money), every family of them would encrease their Fortunes to a great Degree, just as Merchants do by Trade ; whereas now, says Sir Robert, by the Humour of living up to the Extent of their Fortunes, and rather beyond, the Gentlemen, says he, ay, and the Nobility too, are, almost all of them, Borrowers, and all in necessitous Circumstances"⁴⁵.

De foe clearly believed that expensive living, due to a faulty sense of proportion, led inevitably to financial ruin. He once saw a house on fire in a mean little street belonging to a middle-class tradesman from which such velvet, jewels, and

⁴² The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 75.

⁴³ Moll Flanders, vol. I, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁴ The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 75.

⁴⁵ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 195.

furniture were carried out that he was struck with amazement. The mistress of the house seemed to be more concerned with salvaging these articles than with saving the lives of her children, who were left to the care of a maid. He observes that this extravagance ruins the tradesman, and it also robs the husband of the wife's affection⁴⁶. De Foe's characters are usually frugal. Moll Flanders is always careful with her money. When the Gentleman of Bath is liberal in his payments to her, she proceeds to save up for the future

"knowing . . . that such kind of things do not often last long, I took care to lay up as much Money as I could for a wet Day"⁴⁷.

Frugality is thus an aspect of prudence, and does not degenerate into miserliness.

Other risks for the tradesman which De Foe points out are over-trading, giving or taking too much credit, running into projects and giving security. He also advises "breaking" in time so that the creditors may not lose heavily and become estranged and hostile. Another warning given deliberately and at length is against marrying before success in some measure is achieved. Business men have also to be on guard against thieves and pirates. De Foe's novels and criminal biographies show how often tradesmen and merchants suffered losses at their hands. Thus the novels are in a sense complementary to his two volumes of the *English Tradesman*, providing an additional warning to the tradesman to be careful against these lawless folk. They very clearly show that unless the cause of this disorderly

⁴⁶ Review, January, 31, 1713, p. 106; Facsimile Book 22.

⁴⁷ Moll Flanders, vol. I, pp. 122-123.



activity were removed by the removal of poverty and want of education, and also by the increased vigilance of the public, it would prove a menace to the nation's prosperity. The trade of the underworld also deeply interested our author, and the reader sees in his books, not only the vast and complicated machinery of a highly flourishing trade and commerce but also the background against which it operated.

De Foe not only thinks of the conditions that may affect the stability of a business while the tradesman is alive and is able to profit by his warning but also of the circumstances that follow his death. When the master dies, the business often falls to pieces. The wife is only able to look after the household and has no knowledge of the state in which affairs stand after her husband's death. She cannot step into the void and take charge of the situation because she has no business experience, and the children are perhaps too young to do so. The remedy for the misery which visits prosperous families, when such an accident robs them at once of their guardian and their means of livelihood, lies in the wife's learning her husband's business so that in case of necessity she may not be found wanting. In *The Complete English Tradesman* we are told of a widow who carried on her husband's trade :

"the whole trade is preserved, the son and son-in-law grow rich in it, and the widow who soon grows skilful in the business, advances the fortunes of all the rest of the children very considerably".⁴⁸

De Foe wants the husband to teach his business to his wife, so that if there is a calamity it may

⁴⁸ Vol. XVII, p. 222.

not be made worse by her inability to shoulder new responsibilities :

"he (the husband) can never call it a hardship to let his wife into an acquaintance with his business, if she desires it, and is fit for it".⁴⁹

De Foe never believed that women lacked aptitude for business. What he thought on this question appears in his account of Roxana's character. She becomes

"a Woman of Business, and of great business, too",⁵⁰

and she carefully invests her money with a view to doubling her income⁵¹. We are told that her efforts were crowned with success.

Two points stressed by De Foe in the equipment of the would-be successful business man have not yet been noticed; namely, his ability to write in a language free from ambiguities and a habit of book-keeping. In all his correspondence he should use "an easy concise way of writing".⁵² For vagueness and affectation may lead to loss of business besides giving rise to incongruities of style. He follows the observation by an example which anticipates the kind of speech, now associated with Smollett's seamen :

"For how must that sailor appear to a surgeon, whom he had occasion to consult on a swelled face and a bruised leg, when he tells him, that he had a swelling on the north-east side of his face; that his windward leg being hurt by a bruise, it so put him out of trim that he always heeled to starboard when he made

⁴⁹ Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 220.

⁵⁰ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 151; See Infra, Chapter VIII.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 195-197.

⁵² Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 11.



fresh way, and so run to leeward till he was often forced aground; and then desired him to give him some directions how to put himself into a sailing posture again”⁵³

It is interesting to note that Roxana’s Brewer husband failed in his business because of those shortcomings in his character and habits against which De Foe so clearly warns the tradesman:

“he (the Brewer) was so far from being able to write Sence, that he could not make Sence of what others wrote; he was so far from understanding good *English*, that he could not spell good *English*. To be out of all Business was his Delight, and he would stand leaning against a Post for half an Hour together, with a Pipe in his Mouth . . . and this even when his Family was, as it were, starving . . .”⁵⁴.

De Foe is never weary of repeating that the tradesman

“must also diligently keep his books, or else he will never know whether he thrives or not.

Exact keeping his books is one essential part of a tradesman’s prosperity”⁵⁵.

His characters in the novels “keep their books” fairly accurately. Colonel Jack, for example, gives the following account of his ninety-four pounds, representing his assets held in deposit for his benefit:

| | | |
|----|---------|--------------------------------|
| 25 | 1. | The first Money. |
| 9 | | For Six Years Interest. |
| 60 | • | Now paid him. |
| — | | (Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 91). |
| 94 | Pounds. | |

⁵³ Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 21.

⁵⁴ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Complete English, Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 310.

To take another example: this time from *Moll Flanders*:

"my Stock was but low, for I had made but about 540*l.* at the Close of my last Affair, and I had wasted some of that: However, I had about 460*l.* left, a great many very rich Cloaths, a Gold Watch, and some Jewels, tho' of no extraordinary Value, and about 30*l.* or 40*l.* left in Linnen not dispos'd of"⁵⁶.

The circumstantial or detailed manner we see in De Foe's descriptions is probably a tradesman's heritage and may be connected with the habit of exact book-keeping to which he attached so much importance. When this method is applied in cases where money is not involved, the true explanation may be that his practice is being extended to other material. With his experience of trade and manufacture and the various processes they involve, his knowledge of things is usually very clear, and he had no difficulty in writing convincing and detailed accounts of basket-making, pottery-making or of the making of chairs, tables, boxes, shelves, umbrellas, etc., as in *Robinson Crusoe*.

De Foe's life-long interest in all forms of business and manufacture is shown in the *Review*, the *Tour*, *The Complete English Tradesman*, and *A Plan of English Commerce*; also to some extent, in his novels. His knowledge both of foreign and internal trade was extensive and he always wrote on the subject with an easy air of authority. In an article on *The Abominable Vice of Modern Whoring*, written in a jocular vein, he makes the admission,

"Writing upon Trade was the Whore I really

⁵⁶ *Moll Flanders*, vol. I, p. 77.



doated upon, and design'd to have taken up with.⁵⁷

We see this pleasure in trade and manufacture amply illustrated in the novels. Robinson Crusoe makes dozens of things. His voyages were mostly undertaken for trade. De Foe's pirates not only plundered in the high seas but now and then traded in right earnest⁵⁸. Our author's business habits are frequently betrayed in scenes as well as attitudes of mind in the novels. One of them is the pleasure of contemplating vast sums of money, especially in *Captain Singleton* and *The Fortunate Mistress*. Roxana, for example, on learning the particulars of her husband, the Dutch Merchant's magnificent assets,

"stood amaz'd at this Account, as well I might"⁵⁹

and then she proceeds to produce her own equally astonishing treasure in piles of documents. The same trait in our author reveals itself again in a tendency to allegorize money and credit :

"Money has a younger Sister, a very useful and officious Servant in Trade, which in the absence of her senior Relation, but with her Consent, and on the Supposition of her Confederacy, is very assistant to her; frequently supplies her place for a Time, answers all the Ends of Trade perfectly, and to all Intents and Purposes, as well as Money her self; . . . This is a coy Lass, and wonderful chary of her self; yet a most necessary, useful, industrious Creature".⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Review, June 11, 1713, p. 214; Professor Sutherland refers to the passage on p. 133 of his "De Foe".

⁵⁸ *Captain Singleton*, p. 201, 244.

⁵⁹ *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. II, p. 72.

⁶⁰ Review, January 10, 1706; Facsimile Book No. 6, p. 17.

De Foe thought of the Tradesman in the highest terms, and often said,

"a true-bred Merchant is the best of Gentleman"⁶¹.

Not only this; the knowledge of the world which the merchant possessed was an education in itself :

"A True-Bred Merchant, is a Universal Scholar his Learning Excels the meer Scholar in Greek and Latin, as much as that does the Illiterate Person, that cannot Write or Read : He understands Languages without Books, Geography without Maps ; his Journals and Trading Voyages delineate the World . . . he sits in his Counting-House, and Converses with all Nations, and keeps up the most exquisite and extensive part of human Society in a Universal Correspondence"⁶².

He gives extracts from the genealogies of several illustrious families of the English nobility, some of which owe their rise to trade, and others their rank and fortunes to prudent alliances with the families of citizens—the list fills 14 pages of *The Complete English Tradesman* (vol. 17, pp. 227-240), and thus in his thorough-going fashion he substantiates the assertion that trade makes the gentleman⁶³.

De Foe gives the character of the Complete English Tradesman at the close of his work which, however, is not fully concluded till a view of Eng-

⁶¹ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 198 ; G. D. H. Cole's Edition of "Tour", vol. II, pp. 805-806.

⁶² Review, January 3, 1706, pp. 6-7 ; Facsimile Book No. 6. Professor Sutherland has drawn attention to this passage—De Foe, pp. 46-47.

⁶³ The Complete English Tradesman, vol. XVII, p. 246.



lish Commerce has been presented. The tradesman, chosen to illustrate his conception of what an ideal member of the profession should be, is represented in fact during his retired life. For as long as he is in business, his claims to the title are not fully earned :

"Such a man as this, as he rose by steps of wisdom and prudence, so he will stand upon the same bottom, and go on to act by the same rules, and not run into the vices of trade, when he has thriven by the virtues of it.

As he got an estate by honesty, so he will enjoy it with modesty ; he is convinced, that to boast of his own wisdom in the amassing his money, and insult the senses and understanding of every man that has miscarried, is not only a token of immodesty, but the infallible mark of irreligion ; as it is sacrificing to his own net and to his own drag, to his own head and to his own hands.

A wise, sober, modest tradesman, where he is thriven and grown rich, is really a valuable man ; and he is valued on all occasions ; as he went on with everybody's good wishes, when he was getting it, so he has everybody's blessing and good word when he has got it.

If he retains the character when he has retired from business, which he deserved and gained when he was in business . . . as he was useful to himself before, he is useful to everybody else after. Such a man has more opportunity of doing good than almost any other person I can name ; he is useful a thousand ways, and many of them are such, by his experience and knowledge of business, as men of ten times his learning and education, in other things cannot know.

He is, in the first place, a kind of a natural magistrate in the town where he lives ; and all the little causes, which in matters of trade are innumerable, and which often, for want of such a judge, go on to suits at law, and so ruin the people concerned in them by the expense, the delay, the wounds in substance, and the wounds in reputation, which they often bring with them : I say all these causes are brought before him ; and he not only hears and determines them, but in many of them his determination shall be as effectual among the contending tradesmen, and his vote as decisive, as that of any lord chancellor whatever.

He is the general peacemaker of the country, the common arbitrator of all trading differences, family breaches, and private injuries ; and, in general, he is the domestic judge, in trade especially ; and by this he gains a general respect, an universal kind of reverence, in all the families about him, and he has the blessings and prayers of poor and rich.

Again ; he is the trade-counsellor of the country where he lives. It must be confessed, in matters of commerce, lawyers make but very poor work, when they come to be consulted about the little disputes which continually happen among tradesmen ; and are so far from setting things to rights, that they generally, by their ignorance in the usage and customs of trade, make breaches wider rather than close them, and leave things worse than they find them.

But the old, approved experienced tradesman, who has the reputation of an honest man, and has left off business, and gone out of trade, with a good reputation for judgment, integrity, modesty, is the oracle for trade ;



every one goes to him for advice, refers to his opinion, and consults with him in difficult and intricate cases. In short, he may be said to be the trade-chancellor of the place; differences are adjusted, enemies reconciled, equitable questions resolved by him: he is not the arbiter, but the umpire: he is the last resort; even when arbitrators can not make it up, he is chosen to arbitrate between the arbitrators; and not only adjusts differences before they come to a height, and so prevents the people going to law, saving them from the expense of their money, and the wasting extravagances of violent, and perhaps malicious prosecutions, but makes men friends, when they are, as it were, just beginning to be enemies; and before the breaches are come to a head, he stops the irruption; acts the part of a moderator, calms the passions of the furious, checks the spirits of the contentious; and, finding out the healing medium which satisfies both sides, brings them to yield to one another, and so does justice to both.

Thus he is, in a word, a kind of common peacemaker, and is the father of the trading world in the orb or circle wherein he moves; his presence has a kind of peacemaking aspect in it, and he is more necessary than a magistrate, whether he is in office or not”**.

“ The Complete English Tradesman (The Novels and Miscellaneous Works of Daniel De Foe, Oxford, 1841), vol. XVIII, Chapter XLIII, pp. 149-152.



CHAPTER IV

AN ESSAY UPON PROJECTS

"I am never, you know, for searching an evil to be amazed at it, but to apply the remedies," (De Foe's *letter to Robert Harley*, August 7, 1707, Edinburgh, *Portland MSS.*, vol. IV, p. 431).

In his projects De Foe reveals himself as an original and courageous social thinker. He had a wide range of interests and large sympathies. Trade, we have seen, was his favourite subject, and several of his plans are concerned with it. But there is no tendency in him to think in terms of any particular profession; he saw contemporary society with its complex structure as a whole and could say what was wrong with it because, as he declared,

"I have been a diligent observer, and in most
an unconcerned spectator".

He applied himself to social problems and made proposals for advancing the nation's interests. In this field he showed an alert and practical mind united to a rare power of vision. He did not make his various proposals at the same time—the first series, contained in his well-known *Essay*, was offered when he was fully mature though still under forty, and the last, in *Augusta Triumphans* (1728), *Street Robberies, etc.* (1728), and *Second Thoughts are Best* (1729), two or three years before his death. There is no change in his attitude in spite of the long gap between the two series. The

¹ *Essay upon Projects*, Introduction, p. 7, Hazlitt's Edition (London, 1843), vol. III.



only point that may be noticed is that while the *Essay upon Projects* dealt with matters that concerned the whole nation², his subsequent projects were concerned mainly with London. But the distinction is unimportant. For London being the centre of national life and prosperity, any improvement in the metropolis would speedily reflect itself in the life of the whole country.

The general theme of his novels may be summed up as the misery of destitution and a determined struggle to end it, which brings out courage, resourcefulness, and adventure by sea or land³. The aim of his *Essay upon Projects*, written long before the novels, was to provide for a social structure which would ensure increasing justice, prosperity, and security, and, at the same time, further all-round progress. The link between his novels and the projects is found in his social criticism. The latter by minimising undeserved and avoidable suffering would have made the Colonel Jacks and Singletons start their lives under better auspices and would even have taken the sting out of the poverty which made Roxana and Moll Flanders "jump the life to come". The misery of destitution De Foe proposed to bring to an end by a comprehensive scheme of social insurance or what he called "A Pension Office"—an organisation, he tells us, by which

"all mankind, be he never so mean, so poor, so unable, shall gain for himself a just claim to a comfortable subsistence whenssoever age or

² Cp. the explanatory subtitle. "Effectual Ways for advancing the Interests of the Nation." The subtitle for *Augusta Triumphans* is "The Way to make London the most Flourishing City in the Universe."

³ This remark would apply specially to Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders and The Fortunate Mistress.



casualty shall reduce him to a necessity of making use of it".

The Office would provide for free medical aid; maintenance during life in case of physical infirmity, and pensions for widows and for debtors in prison. The stricter measures suggested in his later proposals for public safety would also have made street robbery the least attractive of the dangerous trades, and in this way, the low life pictured by our author would have lost all its objectionable features.

De Foe's proposals for the suppression of street robberies are businesslike and practical. The guardians of law were few and weak. His complaint was that the city was "wretchedly watched". Stout able-bodied men should be appointed watchmen, each having not more than forty houses within his beat. They should be provided with a horn to sound the alarm,

"a convenient number of lamps"

should be set up to assist them in their task. He also suggested that parties of armed horsemen should convey coaches, wagons, etc., for the sake of safety. Street robbery was also committed by soldiers, who should, therefore, be placed under due surveillance⁴. The vagrants were a suspicious tribe. It was necessary to keep them orderly and out of harm's way. Other steps proposed by De Foe were the early closing of public houses and gin shops and the total suppression of "night houses and cellars." De Foe specially warns three classes of people against danger from thieves and robbers

⁴ *Essay upon Projects*, p. 24.

⁵ Second Thoughts are Best, Novels and Miscellaneous Works of De Foe, Oxford, 1841, vol. XVIII, p. 14.

⁶ Street Robberies, etc., London, 1728, 50 f.



—the shopkeeper, the traveller, and the householder. The first is advised to produce his wares one by one when wanted by a customer, and to be cautious how he sent goods home unpaid for⁷. Moll Flanders runs off with £7 worth of fine Holland etc., sent to her by a draper according to her instruction while she lay at an inn in Cambridge, pretending to be asleep. The man who brought the articles was asked to call a little later for the money,

“he left the Parcel very readily, and goes his way, and in about half an Hour my Maid and I walk’d off”⁸.

For the traveller De Foe’s advice is that he should be uncommunicative and cautious with strangers including landlords and hostlers, and courageous, if he actually confronted a robber. He might, for instance, loudly exclaim

“‘tis very hard to be robb’d twice in a Day”⁹, a piece of stratagem that may turn out successful. The housekeeper should not engage maid servants without recommendation or with sweethearts, and when they are found unsatisfactory, the wiser policy would be to send them away immediately instead of retaining them on a month’s notice¹⁰. In *Colonel Jack* there is an account of a waiting man or footman in league with robbers. His plan for robbing his master was, however, frustrated by his getting drunk and being shut out of the house for returning at a late hour of the night¹¹. Accordingly in a household with many servants, the

⁷ Street Robberies, p. 71.

⁸ Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 86.

⁹ Street Robberies, p. 67.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

¹¹ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 77.



master should engage one of them, whom he has found trustworthy, to keep a watch over the rest so that mischief of all kinds may be prevented¹². Thieves and robbers may easily be sent as recruits to the English plantations abroad, and small numbers of them may also be distributed in every ship and

"the Fear of such Proceedings" De Foe believes, "would prevail upon them to seek some (more) honest Employment"¹³.

De Foe's attitude to beggars may also be noticed in this connexion. He points out the anomaly which they present :

"It is a Shame" he writes, "we should suffer real objects of charity to beg; and for those who are not so, it is a shame but they should work"¹⁴.

In his view, however, beggars should be suppressed. For they prowl about in the streets during the day to discover what they can steal at night under cover of darkness¹⁵.

De Foe wrote about prisons in some of his novels showing how far they fell short of being useful institutions for the reform of criminals. As he described it, imprisonment at Newgate tended to strengthen the vices instead of correcting them. His criminals recall their life at Newgate with unaffected horror. De Foe evidently remembers his own experience and his account grows extraordinarily like Dante's *Inferno*. Moll Flanders describes :

"the hellish Noise, the Roaring, Swearing and Clamour, the Stench and Nastiness, and all

¹² Street Robberies, p. 69.

¹³ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁴ Second Thoughts are Best, p. 19.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 18.



the dreadful Afflicting things that I saw there ; joyn'd to make the Place seem an Emblem of Hell itself, and a kind of Entrance into it”¹⁶.

Her mother ekes out the picture by speaking of the consequences of imprisonment :

“there are more Thieves and Rogues made by that one Prison of Newgate, than by all the Clubs and Societies of Villains in the Nation”¹⁷.

The English scholar in *Colonel Jack* transported to Virginia to serve a penal sentence, tells the same story of vices bred in prison, but his experiences related to prison life in Bristol. This shows that Newgate was the rule rather than the exception—it was in fact the type and pattern of prisons all over the country :

“Newgate, (for the Prison at Bristol is call’d so, it seems, as well as that at London) was a place that seldom made Penitents, but often made Villains worse, till they learn’d to defy God and Devil”¹⁸.

One of the fruitful sources of immorality at Newgate was the practice of pleading belly”¹⁹.

De Foe’s attitude to children born out of wedlock shows a high degree of humanity. His proposal that they should be brought up to a useful life, so that they might

“be of benefit to themselves and mankind in General”

¹⁶ Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 98.

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. I, p. 89.

¹⁸ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 197.

¹⁹ Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 100 ; See also Ernest A. Baker, “De Foe as a Sociological Novelist” in “The Academy” for May 26, 1906, pp. 502/. Mr. Baker tells us that the Hardwicke Act of 1753 put an end to this practice and to other similar ones.

was a bold one to make in his time. His plan was "to erect and endow a proper hospital or house to receive them, where we may see them tenderly brought up, as so many living monuments of our charity; every one of them being a convincing proof of a Christian saved, and a murderer prevented"²⁰.

While public charity had an important part to play in the matter, the fathers of bastards could not disown responsibility for their welfare. They should make provision to prevent them from going astray. De Foe's attitude is both humane and rational:

"I am as much against bastards being begot, as I am for (against?) their being murdered; but when a child is once begot, it cannot be unbegotten . . . and we ought to show our charity towards it as a fellow-creature and Christian, without any regard to its legitimacy or otherwise"²¹.

Here we hear the accents of our own time rather than of two hundred years ago. The bastards in De Foe's novels are usually well cared for. Both Moll Flanders and Roxana were responsible for a fairly large number of them, but satisfactory provision was always made for their upbringing. Colonel Jack was less fortunate although he, too, was not deliberately cast away. His mother

"having a Child to keep that should not be seen or heard of"²²

gives him away to a nurse to bring up. But his

²⁰ *Augusta Triumphans*, pp. 8-9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²² *Colonel Jack*, vol. I, p. 1.



environment was most unwholesome, and he was drawn to a mischievous career long before he was of an age to distinguish between right and wrong.

De Foe shows the same generous humanity in his attitude to the negro slave. He condemns the slave trade in his *Reformation of Manners*²³. His long-term proposal was obviously for its total abolition; his short-term proposal was for a kindlier treatment of the slave in the plantation, illustrated by the episode of the negro Mouchat and Colonel Jack, and characteristically recommended on the ground that the plantations would be

"better order'd, and more Work done by the Negroes, who shall be engag'd by Mercy and Lenity, than by those who are driven and dragg'd by the Whips and Chains of a merciless Tormentor"²⁴.

Cruelty to the negro slave is condemned as one of the "publick and National Mistakes and Errors in Conduct"²⁵. De Foe also offered a scheme for idiots who like bastards and negro slaves, were not responsible for their condition and therefore deserved special compassion. His plan was that a

"fool-house be erected, either by public authority or the City, or by an act of Parliament; into which all that are naturals, or born fools, without respect or distinction, should be admitted or maintained".

²³ A Collection of the Writings of the author of the True-Born Englishmen, 1703, p. 72; also Lecky, England in the 18th Century, vol. VII, Ch. XXI, p. 358; see also "Captain Singleton", p. 191.

²⁴ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 174.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 161.

The care of fools he recommends as

"a particular rent charge on the great family of mankind, left by the Maker of us all"²⁶.

Another social reform which De Foe proposed related to prostitution, which appeared to him a major evil of the day because of the great numbers practising it. He was uncompromising in his demand that it should be abolished. He attacked prostitution for its immediate harm as well as for the danger to posterity. Its victims were usually young people who were least able to take care of themselves.

"How many youths, of all ranks, are daily ruined? and how justly may be dreaded the loss of as many more, if a speedy stop be not put to this growing evil? Generations to come will curse the neglect of the present, and every sin committed for the future may be passed to our account, if we do not use our endeavours to the contrary"²⁷.

Many honest women suffered for the vices of their husbands :

"How many honest women . . . get loathsome distempers from their husband's commerce with these creatures, which distempers are often entailed on posterity"²⁸.

De Foe's attitude to cards and dice shows a desire to discriminate between a crime and a diversion.

"I must own, when Gaming is kept within the Bounds of an innocent Diversion, for Recreation, and to unbend the Mind, and does not

²⁶ Essay upon Projects, p. 29.

²⁷ Augusta Triumphans, p. 19.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 20.



come up to Covetousness or Passion, no one can call it a Crime".

But a gamester, he suggested, should be

"shun'd like one that had the Plague, a perjuror, or a Sodomite"²⁹.

Cards and dice, except when used for harmless pastime, should be suppressed, and De Foe suggested as

"a noble retribution, to subject gamesters' estates to the use and support of the poor widows and orphans of their unfortunate bubbles"³⁰.

De Foe mentions a wide-spread practice in the upper classes of sending their wives to madhouses so that

"they may be more secure and undisturbed in their debaucheries"³¹.

Private madhouses were freely used as tools by the rich for the purpose. Our author accordingly proposes their abolition and the constitution of licensed mad houses in convenient parts of the town under proper official supervision³². The position of women was often hard even without such special cruelty. Some of their handicaps they owed to the weaknesses of their personal character, others arose from the defect of Law. Moll Flanders remarks on women's weaker bargaining power in marriage. She recommends to them a firmer attitude, and an enquiry before they enter into any engagement for discovering the true character of the men into whose hands they propose to commit

²⁹ Street Robberies, p. 56.

³⁰ Augusta Triumphans, p. 29.

³¹ Ibid., p. 22.

³² Ibid., p. 24.

themselves for ever. She herself believed that only the inferior sort of women were forward and thoughtless and that if men desired to have women worth having, they might

"find them as uncomeatable as ever"³³.

It was wrong, she thought, that money should play such an important part in a man's choice of a wife that beauty, wit, education and virtue were all left out in the cold³⁴. De Foe once said about a well-bred and well-taught woman,

"the man that has such a one to his portion, has nothing to do but to rejoice in her, and be thankful"³⁵.

The inability of married women to own property independently of their husbands, has been removed in comparatively recent times. De Foe had a vivid sense of the injustice to women arising from this legal limitation, from which they often suffered great hardship. Roxana had a good deal of money of her own when she was married to the Brewer, but as the latter had the spending of it by law she could do nothing while she saw the bread being taken out of her mouth, and of her children's too, by the indolence and stupid habits of her husband. This experience made her quite fittingly a spokeswoman for married women's right when she declined to marry the Dutch merchant :

"that the very Nature of the Marriage-Contract was, in short, nothing but giving up Liberty, Estate, Authority, and everything to the Man, and the Woman was indeed, a mere Woman ever after; that is to say, a Slave"³⁶.

³³ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 74.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁵ Essay upon Projects, p. 43.

³⁶ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 172.



She put the Woman's case with equal force and bitterness, but she did not invent grievances, which were genuine enough :

"whoever the Woman was, that had an Estate, and would give it up to be the Slave of a *Great Man*, that Woman was a Fool, and must be fit for nothing but a Beggar; that it was my Opinion, a Woman was as fit to govern and enjoy her own Estate, without a Man, as a Man was, without a Woman"³⁷.

The implied demand is for a full equality of status with man. She does not weaken her case by thinking of the virtues or vices of individual husbands. The Dutch merchant was not likely to reduce her to the slavery she dreaded; her whole complaint was against the injustice of the law which made such a state of things possible :

"the Laws of Matrimony puts the Power into your Hands;" she told the Dutch merchant, "bids you do it; commands you to command; and bids me, forsooth, to obey; you, that are now upon an even Term with me, and I with you, *says I*, are the next Hour set up upon the Throne, and the humble Wife plac'd at your Footstool"³⁸.

The Married Women's Property Act, in course of its many amendments, fully vindicated the stand taken by Roxana.

De Foe's criticism of the law relating to divorce remains substantially true even now. It could, for example, find a place in Richard Aldington's *All Men are Enemies* or A. P. Herbert's *Holy Deadlock*. The reform proposed by De Foe has not yet come in England though

³⁷ *The Fortunate Mistress*, p. 173.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

changes have been made, one of the last being at the instance of Mr. Herbert. In August 1724 De Foe wrote,

"the very Laws themselves are Deficient, and there are some Inconveniences attending it, I assure you; and that is, in short, the Difficulty a Man has in proving his Wife to be false to him, (so as to take the Legal Benefit the Law allows,) tho' he really knows it to be so"³⁹.

A few months later he wrote again, suggesting "Disagreeableness of Tempers" as a ground for the granting of divorce—a plea which Milton made. But the great poet was mainly inspired by a personal motive, De Foe tells us, and laid his pen down when bantered by his contemporaries. Our author, however, insists that as marriage is a contract, it should be possible to set it aside like other contracts and that temperamental differences between husband and wife should be treated as an adequate reason for the purpose :

"if my Wife and I,—by mere agreeing upon Terms,—came together and married,—why may not my wife and I,—by the like mere agreeing upon Terms,—separate again? For if mutual Consent be the Essence of the Contract of Matrimony, why should not the dissolving that mutual Consent dissolve likewise the Marriage, and disengage the Parties from one another again"⁴⁰.

More than two hundred years later the same point is stressed, though not with equal lucidity and

³⁹ Applebee's Journal, August 15, 1724 : Lee, vol. III, p. 291.

⁴⁰ Applebee's Journal, April 24, 1725 ; Lee, vol. III, pp. 379-380.



directness, by A. P. Herbert in the course of his light-hearted propaganda :

"only in the most difficult choice of all—the choice of a partner, not for business but for life—was a young man expected to be infallible, considered caddish if he confessed to error, and treated as a criminal if he attempted to correct it"⁴¹.

De Foe's ideas on divorce are suggested by the account of the relationship between Roxana and her Jeweller, although it enjoyed neither the protection of law nor the blessing of religion. The Jeweller there made provision for a possible separation when he entered into a kind of contract with Roxana to live with her, agreeing to pay a heavy penalty in case he abandoned her⁴².

A number of proposals by De Foe aim at promoting and safeguarding the interests of tradesmen. To this class belong the measures suggested for the suppression of thieves and robbers. His scheme for borrowing on easy terms from banks was the result of the extortionate policy of goldsmiths which often ruined business people, unable to obtain supplies from any other quarter. De Foe's proposal was that, merchants importing goods from abroad, should get loans from banks to pay customs and should be able to make a suitable profit out of such transactions. Banks should also lend money upon pledges and land securities; they should discount bills, tallies, and notes and have departments for exchanges and foreign correspondences as well as for inland exchanges⁴³. He did not approve of life insurance except in coun-

⁴¹ *Holy Deadlock*, Methuen 1934, p. 5.

⁴² *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. I, p. 45.

⁴³ *Essay upon Projects*, pp. 11-14.

tries like Italy, where the general insecurity greatly increased risks to life. From De Foe the proposal for the construction of highways all over the country comes with a peculiar appropriateness, for very few men in his time had travelled as widely in Great Britain as he had done. The volume of trade and traffic had increased enormously and London required much wider roads to keep pace with the progress. The arterial roads from London for facilitating commerce and communication which he proposed were to be

"large, dry, and clean, well drained and free from floods"⁴⁴.

De Foe formed a scheme for a Court of Enquiries to do justice to tradesmen who break and another for "a Court Merchant" to settle disputed points between rival claims of tradesmen, involving technical knowledge, not possessed by ordinary courts or lawyers.

The financial implications of these proposals are carefully attended to, and suggestions are made for raising the necessary money. The reader is impressed at once by the vision that can extend so far, and the keenness of the eye which does not miss the minutest detail. The projects, like the novels, thus illustrate the double strain in De Foe's nature—the imaginative and the practical⁴⁵.

In his scheme of national development, De Foe gives due importance to education and culture. He formed the project of a University of London⁴⁶ and hoped that London would

"become the scene of science". . .

⁴⁴ Essay upon Project, p. 16.

⁴⁵ The author of an unsigned article published in The Cornhill Magazine, March, 1871, pp. 310-320, vol. XXIII, discusses how most of De Foe's proposals have proved correct anticipations of later developments.

⁴⁶ Augusta Triumphans, p. 4.



Of the various academies he proposed, the first was to become the custodian of the English language and was

"to encourage polite learning, to polish and refine the English tongue, and advance the so much neglected faculty of correct language".

It would also

"preside with a sort of judicature over the learning of the age"⁴⁷.

His proposal for an Academy for women which would teach them

"all sort of breeding suitable to both their genius and their quality"⁴⁸,

including music, dancing, languages and history is intended by him to prepare women for being the equal partners of men.

"I would have men take women for companions, and educate them to be fit for it"⁴⁹.

He proposed an Academy of History⁵⁰ and volunteered to write on its behalf the histories of all Secretaries of State since Walsingham in Queen Elizabeth's reign. An Academy of Music, for which he put forward a plan, is supported by an explanation of his personal interest :

"I have been a lover of the science from my infancy, and in my younger days was accounted no despicable performer on the viol and lute, then much in vogue"⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Essay upon Projects, p. 36.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

⁵⁰ Applebee's Journal, August 26, 1721; Lee, vol. II, p. 419.

⁵¹ Augusta Triumphans, p. 12.

Another proposal made by him was for a Royal Academy for Military Exercises

"from whence his majesty would at all times be furnished with able engineers, gunners, fire-masters, bombardiers, miners and the like"⁵².

De Foe's plan of a "Problematic Society" given in *Applebee's Journal*, and stated to be

"to make Speeches, and deliver in our Performances in Writing, upon some eminent Questions of State"⁵³

corresponds to the activities of the now popular Brains Trust, functioning under the auspices of the B. B. C.

De Foe's fertility of invention was amazing. He looked around him with clear, unbiased eyes and everywhere he saw room for improvement. A full discussion of all his projects would take a much larger space than we can give in a work like the present. The various proposals, already noticed, are, however, a fair indication of his attitude. With De Foe the habit of forming projects was almost a second nature. He himself started his Pantile Works at Tilbury so that the home market could be supplied locally instead of from Holland⁵⁴. He had a plan for extending the market of English woollen manufactures to Ethiopia⁵⁵, a plan for establishing new towns⁵⁶ as well as new colonies⁵⁷. This propensity to planning is present in the

⁵² *Essay upon Projects*, p. 39.

⁵³ *Applebee's Journal*, August 26, 1721, Lee vol. II, p. 420.

⁵⁴ Sutherland, De Foe, p. 50.

⁵⁵ *A Plan of English Commerce*, p. 258/.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁷ *A New Voyage Round the World*, Hazlitt, vol. I, p. 101.



second part of *Robinson Crusoe*, in which we witness the transformation of the desert island into a colony of European and other settlers, forming distinct zones. De Foe planned the training and education of the Complete English Tradesman and the Complete English Gentleman. He planned for youth as well as for age. In the *Protestant Monastery* his object was to found a refuge or club for old age where members would bring their money to a common fund out of which their wants could be supplied.



CHAPTER V

AN APPEAL TO HONOUR AND JUSTICE

"By wise Men courted, and By Fools despis'd".

Review, October 22, 1709, p. 341.

Professor Sutherland gives an exhaustive and critical survey of De Foe's political activities to which there is little to add¹. In this chapter I propose to discuss why he wrote his *Appeal to Honour and Justice* and what he wrote in it, and also to indicate his attitude to the two parties. Some of his political ideas will also be examined, mainly with reference to the novels.

One of the rashest things De Foe ever did in his life was to write *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702). Yet one could see in this rash act the finger of Destiny. He embroiled himself with the High Flyers but they did not at first realise his ironical motive. The explanation for this is that *The Shortest Way* is a successful example of the art of mimicry. It in fact dramatises a High Flyer and De Foe's triumph is proved by the enthusiastic reception given to it on its publication by those whom it aimed at exposing. The fact that the author was himself a dissenter, however, leaked out. The outraged High church men now fell upon him like Furies, and he was punished with pillory and imprisonment. *The Shortest Way* marks a turning-point in De Foe's life. Its immediate effect was his financial ruin by the collapse of his Tilbury Pantile Works. But it also laid the foundation of his literary career and made him realise his strength as a writer. The

¹ Sutherland: De Foe, Chapters III to X.



increasing volume of his publications dating from this period, and the enterprise of the *Review* upon which he launched soon after his release from Newgate, point to De Foe's new sense of literary vocation. His interest in criminals and outcasts of society, shown in his novels and criminal biographies, is directly connected with his own imprisonment, and the close association with Robert Harley who delivered him from Newgate in November, 1703², which now began, shaped the events of his life for the next ten years. The *Appeal* is an explanation of his political conduct and principles during these ten years.

De Foe wrote in the *Review* more than five years before the date of his "Appeal":

"He that cannot live above the Scorn of Scoundrels, is not fit to live; Dogs will bark, Malice will rage, Slander will revile—and they shall; without lessening one Moment of my Tranquility"³.

This attitude may owe something to Harley⁴. But the very fact that he wrote the *Appeal* would suggest that his tranquillity was disturbed. This was probably due less to "the Scorn of Scoundrels" than to the changed situation brought about

² The date of his release is very likely November 2, 1703. For on this day a year later he writes to Harley, conveying his sense of deep gratitude (Portland MSS IV, p. 146). This is perhaps an indication that he is observing the first anniversary of his deliverance, not unlike Robinson Crusoe who observed the anniversary of his coming to the island with great regularity.

³ *Review*, October 22, 1709, pp. 341-342; Facsimile Book, No. 15.

⁴ De Foe seems here to re-echo Harley who wrote to him on June 12, 1707 (Portland MSS, vol. IV, p. 418), "I count upon all that impotent malice, inveterate spleen can do by misrepresentation, and notorious forgeries to do me hurt. I am prepared for all".

by the Hanoverian succession. About this he wrote to Harley on September 28, 1714 :—

"I presume the artifice of the present politicians is now to have it believed that all who acted under the late administration were enemies to the succession of the present King, and in such a stream as now runs such absurdities may go down, how evident soever the contrary may be"⁵.

His principal aim in the *Appeal* is clearly to show that he was not a Jacobite and that he had all along been a staunch supporter of the House of Hanover. His enemies called him, "Villain, Rascal, Miscreant, Lyer, Bankrupt, Fellow, Hireling, Turn-coat, etc."⁶. Yet in his *Appeal* he is more concerned to convince the new regime of his determined loyalty to the Protestant cause as represented by George I than to prove to his enemies that he was honest. He was evidently successful in his design. For not long after in the same year (1715) he was working for the new whig ministers "as a secret agent, or not to mince words, as a spy upon Jacobite editors and writers"⁷.

The *Appeal* is thus a vindication of his public conduct and also, to a less extent, that of Harley. Although his primary concern is to show that he is not a Jacobite, he tries also to defend himself against the charge of being a hireling and recounts the various occasions when, not without justification, he had opposed the Whigs in public matters.

⁵ Portland MSS, vol. V, p. 496.

⁶ An appeal to Honour and Justice included in the volume 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters', Shakespeare Head Edition, p. 231.

⁷ W. P. Trent, Daniel De Foe: How to Know Him, p. 123; Indianapolis (1916), The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Publishers; Sutherland, De Foe, p. 218.



It is from this party, he tells us, that the accusation now comes of his being a turn-coat*. He seems, however, to be at greater pains to prove that Harley never directed what he should write than to disprove the charge of being a hireling himself. The popular view of his relations with Harley was

"That I have been employ'd by the Earl of O(xfor)d, late Lord Treasurer, in the late Disputes about Publick Affairs, to write for him, or to put it into their own Particulars, have written by his Direction, taken the Materials from him, been dictated to, or instructed by him, or by other Persons from him, by his Order, and the like".

He would have had no qualms of conscience if the charge had been true. For he thought it was no aspersion on himself to be directed by a man who had the honour of being in the Queen's confidence; but such an imputation, he declared, was a scandal on his patron, and he did all he could to clear it.

"I should not think it a Reproach to be directed by a Man to whom the Queen had at that time entrusted the Administration of the Government. But as it is a Reproach upon his Lordship, Justice requires that I do Right in this Case".¹⁰

As to his being a hireling, his defence does not sound convincing. At first he categorically denies having received any money from Harley,

"except the Appointment I mention'd before . . . or of any one else by his Order, Knowledge, or Direction, one Farthing or the Value of a Farthing, during his whole Administration".¹¹

* An Appeal, p. 233.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 228.

But a little later, he shows a readiness to answer charges against himself, which to some extent weakens, if it does not actually cancel, the previous denial. If his critics come with a straight question, he promises a candid answer :

"Would they come to any Particulars with me, what real Guilt I may have I would freely acknowledge; and if they would produce any Evidence of the Bribes, the Pensions, and the Rewards I have taken, I would declare honestly, whether they were true or no"¹².

De Foe makes the most solemn asseveration to exculpate the Earl of Oxford from the charge of being the keeper of his conscience as author and journalist :

"Neither did I ever shew, or cause to be shew'd to his Lordship, for his Approbation, Correction, Alteration, or for any other Cause, any Book, Paper, or Pamphlet, which I have Written and Publish'd before the same was Printed, work'd off at the Press and Publish'd"¹³.

This defence, however, does not square with the facts as we know them¹⁴.

¹² An Appeal, p. 235.

¹³ Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁴ The Harley Papers reveal how often his publications are inspired by hints given by his patron. On May 21, 1706, he writes : "Will a short essay on those mighty affairs be accepted from me in this juncture? is a question, which if answered by you, sir, would help inspire the performance". (Portland MSS. vol. IV, p. 305); A letter written on May 27, 1712 shows that he is waiting to chisel arguments according to instruction. The "Flying Post" reported the day before that a British General refused to fight or undertake a siege with the confederates on the authority of the Queen's order. Was it a fact or a libel? If a fact on receipt of "the least remote hint from your



Do Foe makes a further attempt to vindicate his patron. He knows of course that this is no part of his business, but he skilfully manages to speak a few words that may help him in the midst of a grave danger to his personal safety :

"I come next to the General Clamour of the Ministry *being for the Pretender* I am not Vindicating their Conduct, but my own; As I never was Employ'd in anything that way, so I do still protest, I do not believe it was ever in their Design, and I have many Reasons to confirm my Thoughts in that Case, which are not material to the present Case"¹⁵.

Lordship, something might easily be said without doors that would take off the edge of the popular surprise" (Sutherland, De Foe, p. 192; Portland MSS. vol. V, p. 178). On December 7, 1713 he writes to Harley that his "Letter to the Dissenters" was written in response to his request—"the hint is your Lordship's own". (Portland MSS. vol. V, p. 371). On May 21, 1714 he proposes to explain plans for making the "Mercator" more useful to Lord Oxford: "it may please you to have that paper made more useful" (Portland MSS. Vol. V, p. 445). On August 31, 1714, he tells his patron, "It has been long that I have been endeavouring to take off the virulence and rage of the "Flying Post" (Portland MSS. Vol. V, p. 492). From Professor Sutherland we learn that "During the first seven months of 1714 he was paid no less than £500 out of Secret Service Funds". (De Foe, p. 201). He received this money in his assumed name of "Claude Guillot". Evidently things were going on very well for him. Another incident to which Professor Sutherland refers provides a glimpse of his character, not very pleasant to contemplate. At the time of Sacheverell's trial he said in the "Review" he could if he chose disclose damaging things about his morals and manners but he refrained from doing so "on account of his troubles" and yet at the same time he was writing to Stanhope as to how he could get hold of material to expose the prelate's character. (Sutherland, De Foe, pp. 172-173).

¹⁵ An Appeal, etc., pp. 224-225.

Shortly after the publication of the *Appeal* the Earl of Oxford was confined to the Tower where he was detained for two years (1715-1717) on the suspicion of having Jacobite leanings. This was De Foe's chance, therefore, to serve his benefactor while clouds gathered over his head threatening his ruin, and make some return for what he owed to him. Harley's situation, to some extent, resembled his own when he lay in the prison of Newgate in 1703.

With a Hanoverian King on the throne, self-interest naturally led De Foe to refresh the memory of all who could advance his prospects in the new reign that "No man in this Nation ever had a more riveted Aversion to the *Pretender*"¹⁶, and also that he "was the first Man that ever was oblig'd to seek a Pardon for writing for the *Hanover Succession*"¹⁷. His past life provided evidence of his sincere zeal for the Protestant cause, ruling out all possibilities of a Jacobite bias: "A Man that had been in Arms under the Duke of *Monmouth*, against the Cruelty and Arbitrary Government of his pretended Father"¹⁸, could not now turn Jacobite. He had stood against King James's measures, apparently conciliatory to the Dissenters, fearing that they were the thin end of the wedge for reviving Popery. His praise of King William is intended still further to clarify his fundamental position :

"I say let them call to mind who it was that guided their Thoughts first to the Protestant Race of our Kings in the House of *Hanover*, and that it is to King *William*, next to Heaven it self, to whom we owe the Enjoying of a Protestant King at this time"¹⁹.

¹⁶ An Appeal, etc., pp. 213-214.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 196.



He defends the Earl of Oxford against the charge of intriguing for the Pretender, partly because this will also establish his own innocence; for he challenges the worst of his enemies "to prove, that I ever kept Company, or had any Society, Friendship, or Conversation with any *Jacobite*"²⁰. But he was also genuinely anxious to stand by his patron out of gratitude for what he had done for him, and De Foe seemed to be under the impression that he could serve him best if he could prove that his political opinions were his own and not inspired or influenced by Oxford.

De Foe had himself suffered for being supposed to be in league with the Jacobites. He tells us in the *Appeal* that he was prosecuted for writing in the Pretender's interest on the basis of some of his political pamphlets. He had then to throw himself on the clemency of the Queen. She granted him a Pardon, because "*She saw nothing but private Pique in the first Prosecution*"²¹. The titles of the pamphlets could easily lend colour to the charge brought against him by his enemies²². De Foe, however, chose them deliberately so as to induce the Jacobites to read them, and to warn them of the mischief their conduct might cause their country and themselves²³. His trouble in the present case arose because his object was maliciously misinterpreted. Speaking of these pamphlets De Foe wrote significantly:

"had his present Majesty, the Elector of Hanover, given me a thousand Pounds to have written for the Interest of his Succession,

²⁰ An Appeal, etc., p. 220.

²¹ Ibid., p. 217.

²² "What if the Pretender should come", "Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover" are the titles of two of the offending pamphlets on which the prosecution based its case.

²³ An appeal, etc., p. 212.

and to expose and render the Interest of the *Pretender* odious and ridiculous, I could have done nothing more effectual to those purposes than these Books were”²⁴.

De Foe tells us in the *Appeal* that about the year 1694 he refused a lucrative post at Cadiz, offered by some Merchants, and was engaged in

‘proposing *Ways and Means* to the Government for raising Money to supply the Occasions of the War then newly begun’²⁵.

To justify this choice, the future author of the *Essay upon Projects* must have already been noted for the originality of his financial ideas. His recent bankruptcy could hardly have been a recommendation for him. He was afterwards appointed ‘Accomptant to the Commission of Glass Duty’, a post he held as long as the duty was in force (1699). *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), his answer to Tutchin’s *The Foreigners*, brought him to the notice of King William, for whom he always had the highest respect and admiration. De Foe condenses the account of his association with King William tantalizingly : “How this Poem was the Occasion of my being known to His Majesty; how I was afterwards receiv’d by him; how Employ’d; and how, above my Capacity of deserving, Rewarded, is no part of the present Case”²⁶. He might well have given fuller details if his purpose was indeed to vindicate himself in the eye of the public, accustomed to hear him mentioned as a mercenary author and a turn-coat; but as has already been suggested, he did not try particularly to resolve

²⁴ An Appeal, etc., p. 213.

²⁵ Ibid., etc., pp. 194-195.

²⁶ Ibid., etc., p. 195.



their doubts but to represent himself to those who were in authority under King George as a very ill-used person, whose loyalty to the House of Hanover would not even shield him from unjust and malicious persecution. Some years earlier he wrote proudly in the *Review* about his relations with King William :

"It has been my Honour to be heard and valued by the best King that ever reign'd over you—And I can, with a Boasting not contrary to Modesty, write it on my Grave, as the true Character of my Life, *By wise Men courted, and by Fools despis'd*"²⁷.

After his release from prison Harley employed him as a Government Servant. He held several posts, all confidential in nature.

"I had the Honour to be employ'd in several honourable, tho' secret Services, by the Interposition of my first Benefactor, who then appear'd as a Member in the Publick Administration"²⁸.

On Harley's dismissal, favours were not withdrawn from him as he thought they would be. Godolphin, the new Lord Treasurer, re-introduced him to Her Majesty and

'obtain'd for me the Continuance of an Appointment which Her Majesty had been pleas'd to make me in Consideration of a former special Service I had done, and in which I had run as much risque of my Life, as a Grenadier upon the Counterscarp'²⁹.

²⁷ Review, October 22, 1709, p. 341, Facsimile Book, No. 15.

²⁸ An Appeal, p. 201.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 203.

The secret service in connexion with the Union was both a difficult and dangerous one. For he wrote to Harley in January, 1707,

"I confess I have had an uneasy post here (Edinburgh), under so many frequent fears of murder, tumult, rabble, etc.; but I resolve not to be uneasy in any of your commands"³⁰.

A few months later he uses his favourite figure in describing the risks of his employment in Scotland :

" . . . without boasting I ran as much risk of my life as a grenadier in storming a counter scarp"³¹.

The few particulars he has disclosed are scattered through some eight pages of his *Appeal* showing clearly a reluctance to take the public into his confidence on such matters. We can now fill out the meagre account with the help of his correspondence with Harley, published by the *Historical Manuscripts Commission* in volumes IV and V of the *Portland MSS.* Of his work in Scotland he writes :

"my Errand was such as was far from being unfit for a Sovereign to direct, or an honest man to perform"³².

De Foe was conscious of the value of the services rendered by him :

"The Effect of those Services, however small, are enjoy'd by those Great Persons, and by the whole Nation, to this Day; and I had the

³⁰ Portland MSS. IV, p. 379, January 4, 1706(7).

³¹ Letter to Harley, September 11, 1707 (Edinburgh), Portland MSS., Vol. IV, p. 444.

³² An appeal, p. 204.



Honour once to be told, *That they should never be forgotten*"³³.

The secret employment to which he refers was touring the country to ascertain the state of public opinion; also as a sort of election agent on behalf of Harley. In Scotland he had more important duties to perform. He stayed there as a private gentleman, smoothing the road for the union of the two countries. He often assumed such names as Claude Guilot and Alexander Goldsmith in his correspondence with Harley and maintained great secrecy about his plans, purposes, and activities. This was in accordance with Harley's instruction, given to him in September, 1706, though De Foe seemed also to have enjoyed the secrecy his duties imposed upon him: "You are to use the utmost caution that it may not be supposed you are employed by any person in England, but that you came there on your own business and out of love to the country"³⁴. Accordingly he invented various accounts of the business that brought him to the country—like flying for debt, writing a history of the Union,³⁵ building ships, purchasing a house, becoming a fish-, woollen-, or linen-, merchant³⁶. The tales were suited to his audience but it certainly required no small tact and prudence not to be betrayed by the contradictions they contained. The frequent suggestions made by De Foe about matters of policy show that he did not consider himself as a subordinate, limited to his sphere. Harley evidently did not play the superior rôle. He wrote to De Foe on June 12, 1707, "I am very sorry that you, or your humble servant, should bear reproach for doing what others could not or would not do"³⁷.

³³ Portland MSS., vol. IV, p. 228.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 334.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 358.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 385.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. IV, p. 418.

Harley often asked for his views on important questions. De Foe wrote on September 15, 1711 :

"In obedience to your Lordship's command I have applied my thoughts seriously to the affair of a Commander-in-Chief in Scotland"³⁸.

It was not only Harley who valued his opinions. A much older statesman, Lord Godolphin, also realized their worth. He wrote to Harley on January 16, 1707 :

"De Foe's letter is serious and deserves reflection. I believe it is true and it ought to guide us very much in what we are doing here, and to take care in the first place to preserve the peace of that Country"³⁹.

In 1711 De Foe laid before his patron a plan for establishing a colony "on the coast between the river De La Plata and the Fretum Magellanicum . . . near the mouth of Rio Camaróni"⁴⁰. This proposal has a literary significance; the argument by which he supported it to Harley he advanced again with scarcely a change some fourteen years later in *A New Voyage Round the World*,⁴¹ which concludes with the following observation :

"I take the liberty to recommend that part of America as the best and most advantageous part of the whole globe for an English Colony, the climate, the soil, and above all, the easy communication with the mountains of Chili, recommending it beyond any place that I ever saw or read of".⁴²

³⁸ Portland MSS., vol. V, p. 90.

³⁹ Ibid., vol. IV, p. 382. ⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. V, p. 60.

⁴¹ This point does not seem previously to have been noticed.

⁴² *A New Voyage Round the World*, Hazlitt, vol. I, p. 101.



De Foe states his political convictions to which he adhered consistently in the *Appeal* in the following words :

"I was from my first entring into the Knowledge of publick Matters, and have ever been to this Day, a sincere Lover of the Constitution of my Country; zealous for Liberty, and the Protestant Interest; but a constant Follower of moderate Principles, a vigorous Opposer of hot Measures in all Parties: . . . I never once deviated from the Revolution Principles, nor from the Doctrine of Liberty and Property, on which it was founded."⁴³

On matters of lesser significance, not inconsistent with his fundamental loyalties, he was apt to be guided by expediency. He might have appeared to be an opportunist when he passed from crying down the peace to its qualified support. His reason for this is still attractive and may have something in it after all⁴⁴. He desired a peace that would have secured the ascendancy of Protestant interests, but when a different sort of peace was concluded, he proposed to make the best use of it. His policy was not to cry over spilt milk. This attitude of mind need not be due to mercenary motives. There is scope for holding it honestly, and De Foe might well have submitted to the logic of circumstance without departing from honesty.

Professor Sutherland tries to resolve the anomalies in De Foe's political conduct by the following explanation :

"If he was sometimes a hireling, it was partly, at least, as a barrister is a hireling : given a

⁴³ An appeal, etc., p. 232.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 209-210.

case to put, he was a master at putting it clearly and convincingly”⁴⁵.

De Foe’s ability to put a case convincingly is not obviously meant to be the object of this criticism. It is the abuse of this power—changing his briefs like a barrister without the latter’s professional justification—which the word *hireling* is intended to condemn. But the explanation turns De Foe into a kind of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. For whatever may be said about his being a mercenary, there cannot be any question as to his patriotism. In the cause of liberty and in the defence of the constitution he showed both courage and devotion. One outstanding example of this is provided by the *Legion’s Memorial* which he wrote and presented to the Speaker of the House of Commons. This document is a most fearless declaration of the sovereignty of the People and a defiance to the House to ignore it if they dared. He never put personal interests above the good of his country. When he was prosecuted for writing in the Pretender’s interest, he coolly surveyed his position and advised Harley as to what help could be given him without in any way exposing his patron⁴⁶. He always knew—even in a situation in which many others would have lost their heads—how to subordinate personal interest to the cause he served. Where he is not acting honestly, his object is usually disinterested. His method of doing a thing is often open to objection but not so the end he proposes to serve. He was a political pragmatist who laboured in the cause of his country’s good but often selected his technique of doing his work with little regard to the principle of honesty. From this point of view much that is otherwise irrecon-

⁴⁵ Sutherland, De Foe, p. 183.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 197-198.



cilable in his character will present a coherent picture and it will not be necessary to condemn him as a hireling because he defends certain measures for the vindication of the government under Harley. The real fact will now seem to be that in defending such measures he defends a man who represents moderation and ensures in this way the continuity of a policy in which he had been a believer all his life.

De Foe's opportunism reappears in some of the principal characters of his novels. In Moll Flanders and Roxana we see this chiefly when they try to marry as advantageously as they can. Robinson Crusoe, repentant in a sea tossed by storm and resolved to return home, drowns his good resolutions the very next day, when the weather clears up, in his cups⁴⁷. De Foe's love of secrecy and disguise is also found in his characters. Colonel Jack liked to wear a disguise for its own sake⁴⁸. Moll Flanders and Roxana were, however, prompted by necessity⁴⁹. The complications in the desert island, which arose when the ship's rebel crew arrived there, made Crusoe play the role of his Governor's Deputy⁵⁰. Prudence was another characteristic of De Foe⁵¹, and we find this in all his characters who try to avoid impulsive action and to behave with prudence and foresight.

De Foe's enlightened views are seen to advantage in his attitude towards primitive peoples. This appears particularly in Robinson Crusoe's conduct. At first he decided to shoot the savages at

⁴⁷ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Colonel Jack, vol. II, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 63; vol. II, pp. 30, 75; The Fortunate Mistress, vol. II, p. 18.

⁵⁰ Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 65.

⁵¹ De Foe and Thomas Bowrey by Sir R. C. Temple, Notes and Queries, January 17, 1931, pp. 39-40.

sight if they were engaged in a cannibal feast but cooler and calmer thoughts presented the ethics of the situation in a different light. From the approach he makes to the question, we can see that De Foe felt that even savagery might have its justification and that we are likely to perpetrate a worse wrong than we can prevent by giving way to pure idealism. His whole attitude to the savages was statesmanlike. In *A Plan of English Commerce* he speaks of colonies of Englishmen among savages and indicates the policy to be followed towards the latter :

"I say nothing of christianizing the Savages, 'tis remote from my present Purpose; and I doubt much more remote from our practice, at least in most Places; but I speak of an Incorporation of Customs and Usages, as may in Time bring them to live like Christians, whether they may turn Christians or no"⁵².

De Foe's characters in their dealings with savages, sometimes freely adopt their customs and show little disposition to despise them as their inferiors. Thus Singleton's friends put up a long pole as a signal of friendship, borrowing the savage practice⁵³. The savages in Crusoe's island received an area where they could live freely and they were taught some civilized arts by the Spaniards. It was then proposed to employ them as servants, but there was no question of reducing them to slavery⁵⁴. De Foe saw in liberty a guarantee of happiness and progress, and in slavery a perpetual encouragement to slothfulness and in-

⁵² *A Plan of English Commerce*, p. 256 (Shakespeare Head Edition).

⁵³ Captain Singleton, p. 38.

⁵⁴ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. III, p. 59.



activity⁵⁵ and this would explain why he did not want the savages to become slaves, and permitted them to enjoy their independence even in defeat. Such a broad-minded and liberal attitude is an honour equally to De Foe's good sense and humanity.

The cannibals ate their prisoners and the Christians sometimes put them to death. De Foe knows that neither the one nor the other could properly be described as murderers. For in both cases, their conduct is guided by the convention of their particular societies. And so Crusoe remarks :

"these People (the Savages) were not Murtherers . . . any more than those Christians were Murtherers, who often put to Death the Prisoners taken in Battle"⁵⁶.

But Crusoe does not want to shed blood even in self-defence⁵⁷. Cruelty is abhorrent to him and when many savages were killed in a battle with the European settlers, and he sees them scattered about dead or dying, he is moved to pity by this spectacle of human misery :

"a Sight disagreeable enough to generous Minds; for a truly great Man, tho' obliged by the Law of Battle to destroy his Enemy, takes no Delight in his Misery"⁵⁸.

But civilized life has not yet learned to do without war, and even reprisals may sometimes be necessary. In *The Farther Adventure*, the English set fire to a village in Madagascar in revenge for the murder of one of their numbers by a native,

⁵⁵ Review VI, 226 ; VIII 262 ; Walter Wilson, De Foe, vol. I, p. 382.

⁵⁶ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 198.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 231.

⁵⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 211.

killing some 150 people. Crusoe, whose nephew was the Captain of the Ship, tried to stop the wanton destruction of lives that was going on but nobody paid any attention to him. Soon after, five of the Ship's crew were either killed or carried into captivity by the Arabs. Crusoe now upbraided the authors of the cruel massacre at Madagascar with the retribution of Heaven but he was surprised to discover that none of these five men had any part in it. The episode suggests that De Foe realized that there was a hiatus between public and private morals⁵⁹ in certain spheres and that what might be permissible under one might be entirely opposed to the spirit of the other. We may contrast the Madagascar incident with De Foe's attitude to private morals. An Englishman, in league with the notorious William Atkins is killed by the arrow of a savage. This man, we learn, cut a poor savage with his hatchet, and intended to murder all the Spaniards⁶⁰. Again, a savage who received shelter and hospitality at the island, ran away to his own people, basely informing them against the Europeans and returning in strength to attack and destroy those to whom he owed nothing but good. For this act of treachery he does not, however, go unpunished, and is among the first to fall in the sharp engagement that follows. Thus any offence against personal morality is apt to be punished, whether the offender is black or white.

⁵⁹ Cp. De Foe's summary of the Book III of his "Jure Divino: A Satire", included in the Table of Contents: "An inquiry why God in his providence gives power to wicked men, and while he punishes private murders and injustice, leaves the world at the mercy of tyrants, to ravage and destroy it at their pleasure". Works, Hazlitt, vol. III. The Table of Contents.

⁶⁰ Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 215.



De Foe stresses in his novels the significance of discipline and organization. In *Captain Singleton*, twenty-seven of the Ship's crew had to shift for themselves in Madagascar, surrounded by unfriendly savages. But they rose to the occasion and immediately organized themselves under a leader with definite rules to guide them. When they seized some negroes to carry their burdens, an oath of loyalty was administered to them. Their journey across thousands of miles of African wilderness showed the order and discipline they maintained under the most difficult conditions. Robinson Crusoe formed a commonwealth with the Spaniards, the English, and the savages and he made them promise him "to live in Love and good Neighbourhood with one another"¹. As long as he lived in the island, he was its King², and the most important fact about his administration was the liberty of conscience he allowed throughout his dominions³. His style was royal enough with his fortified capital and a pleasant country seat. Whenever strangers arrived, he demanded from them an unquestioning allegiance to his authority⁴. With his withdrawal from the island, the monarchy comes to an end. His authority was natural, being the result of his achievement but among strangers, justice required that no invidious distinction should be made. Crusoe left them free to establish their own laws and constitution as they chose.

De Foe strongly criticised certain practices that weakened the political morals of the people and robbed them of the voice to which they were entitled in choosing the form of government for themselves. To this class belonged the practice of bribing and distribution of wine among the electo-

¹ Robinson Crusoe, vol. III., p. 59.

² Ibid., vol. II, p. 30.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 35, 47.

rate on the eve of Parliamentary election.⁶⁵ He is not opposed to bribery as such. If its object is the promotion of general interest, he will not question its legitimacy. He himself gave bribes but his end was the furtherance of the cause of the Union. He wrote to Robert Harley from Edinburgh on March 18, 1707; "I have my spies and my pensioners in every place"⁶⁶. But he condemned the giving of bribes for advancing merely personal interests. He gives us an interesting portrait of a baronet (Sir William—) among the Boors, drinking wine in the rude company with a view to winning their support at the election.

"on one hand of him sits a Butcher greasie and the Master of the Company, fat as a Bullock of 12l. Price, drunk as a Drum, drivelling like a Boar, foaming at Mouth with a Pipe in his Jaws; and being in the open Yard, holds it so that the Wind carries the Smoke directly in Sir William's Face; on the other hand sits a Tanner, not so fat, but twice as drunk as t'other, every now and then he lets a great Fart, and first drinks his Worship's Health, and then spues upon his Stockings; a third gets up from the lower End of the Table to make a Leg, and drink to his Worship; then comes so near him to give him the Flagon, that making his reeling Bow, he spills some of the Beer upon him, gives a great Belch in his Face, and so scratching his Head, waits till his Worship must drink after him, and give him the Pot again and making his Leg again a little too low, runs forward, being as the Sailors call too much by the Head, and oversets Sir William's Chair and all, and falls

⁶⁵ Review, October 7, 1710, pp. 331f, F.B. 18.

⁶⁶ Portland MSS, vol. IV, p. 396.



upon him, the rest get all up to help him up; and two or three of them dragging their Brother Beast off him, Sir *William* gets up himself, and his Man is fain to help them up one after another—Well, then his Worship sits, there's no getting away from them; if he offers to stir away, what won't your Worship drink with us, we'll all vote for you, then a Hiccup and an Oath by their Maker, and every Word interleaved with Damnation and Curses”⁶⁷.

The picture continues for another page crammed with the details about the low conviviality of the vulgar. It is an exhortation by example to refrain from corrupt practices in connexion with elections, and at the same time, a proof of De Foe's pleasure in representing what he observed. The realism of the scene is striking, and later authors of the realist school may well have copied from such a master. Here we see the political pamphleteer transformed into the literary artist, evoking a scene to aid an argument, as was his wont, and using in it the exact and detailed manner which was to be the basis of his art in his novels.

To conclude the Chapter, I will reproduce some of De Foe's “Characters” by way of indicating his attitude to the various parties in the Church and the State. Besides being useful as a study of his political views, they bridge for us the gulf between De Foe the Pamphleteer and De Foe the Novelist. I will add a short account of what our author thought to be the essential virtues of a great and good Minister of State. But before we concern ourselves with what he thought about

⁶⁷ Review, June 8, 1708, pp. 123-124, Facsimile Book No. 12.

parties, we may stop for a moment to notice a specimen of his literary duels with people with whom he disputed on matters of public interest. Professor Sutherland has given a delightful illustration of one such passage at arms⁶⁸ between De Foe and Lord Haversham in 1705. We may add to it the following burlesque on the same peer, who had shortly before, violently criticised the Government. In the *Review* from which we quote the passage, he ironically agreed with Lord Haversham, who was opposed to the Union, and about whose object an "old wife", according to our author, gave the following opinion : "Ay, ay, says the good old Woman, *first*, he would have them out that he might get in, and *secondly*, it would be effectal, *that is, says she*, to ruin us all"⁶⁹. The burlesque runs thus :

"And He DREAMED, and it seemed unto him as if it were, but he awoke and behold it was a DREAM.

There was a Man and he made a *Speech*, and it was a Man that used to make a *Speech*, and it was a Man that used to make a *long Speech*; and the Man that made the *Speech* was a Lord, and this Lord made a *long Speech*, and at the End of this Lord's *long Speech*, behold another Lord stood up and made a *Speech*, and this was a very *short Speech*; but the Lord that made the *short Speech*, was supposed fully to have answer'd the Lord that made the *long Speech*; for he said unto him—that he DREAMED, and it seem'd unto him as if it were, but when he awoke, behold it was a DREAM".

(The Review, December 6, 1707).

⁶⁸ Sutherland, De Foe, pp. 117-119.

⁶⁹ *Review*, December 6, 1707, p. 510.



AN OLD WHIG

"An old whig, therefore, is one who prefers the Publick Good to all other Considerations ; that is, has regard to no Man for the Pompous Name he assumes, if his Practice be contrary to it, or the inviduous Appellations that are given him, provided he acts according to the true *English Principles of Law and Liberty* : That has always the good of his country in his Eye, whether it be pursu'd by the Prince or the People ; That is Zealous against the Mismanagement of the Publick Treasure, tho' never so plausibly disguised ; for the Rights and Privileges of Parliament, and the just Prerogatives of the Crown ; that joins with those who oppose Oppression of the Subject in any kind, let them be call'd *Whig* or *Tory* ; That is against Favourites of all Kinds, as Vermin destructive of the Honour of his Prince and Zealous of his own Advantages ; That serves his country without Self-Aims, etc."

(*Rogues on Both Sides*, London, 1711,
pp. 9-10).

A MODERN WHIG

"A Modern Whig, is a Man who makes loud Clamours in his Pretensions to these gold-like Qualities, only to wheedle Fools into a Belief of his Honesty, that he may have it in his Power to betray them, and fill his own Pockets. That rails at Prerogative, when out of Power ; but runs it up to its highest degree of Madness, when employ'd in making Grants to him, or his Confederates ; or skreening them from the just Anger and Resentment of the People in Parliament assembled : That

Preaches up Moderation when undermost, yet observes none in Power : That runs the Nation in Debt, that they may have the Management of the Credit. . . ."

(*Rogues on Both Sides*, p. 10).

AN OLD TORY

"An *Old Tory* is an honester Man than the *Modern Whig*; for he is one, who plainly, tho' very foolishly and absurdly, tells us, that we are ordain'd by God, to be Slaves to one Man's Humour and Will; and that to resist him on any Occasion whatever, tho' in defence of all Things sacred and dear, is to incur eternal Damnation; as if God had made Twenty Millions for the Sake of one, who may have less Knowledge, Goodness, Honesty and Religion, than any of that Vast Number. . . . The *Old Tory* may be look'd on as a Fool or Mad Man, but the *Modern Whig* can only pass for a Knav[e]. . . ."

(*Rogues on Both Sides*, p. 20).

A MODERN TORY

"All that has been said of the *Old Whig*, may be repeated of the *Modern Tory*, with this Addition, that he is truly Zealous for the Church, as by Law establish'd and may perhaps sometimes by that be hurry'd away to more Violent Measures against the *Dissenters*, than are agreeable to a truly Christian Temper. For indeed the Church being a Part of our Laws, he may be allow'd to be Zealous for it, tho' Judgment shou'd direct that Zeal, not to form imaginary Dangers where there can be none."

(*Rogues on Both Sides*, p. 27).



A JACOBITE

"This Creature is a Thing with two Souls in one Body, two Faces upon one Head, two pair of Hands upon the same Arms, two pair of Feet on the same Legs—He has Eyes to look towards every Point of the Compass, and yet he is blind; Ears to hear every Sound, and he's deaf: He does not *look one way and row another*, for he looks every way, and rows no way; he is Religious without Conscience, Moral without Honesty, Furious without Anger, and Sober without Moderation; he swears Faith to every Body, and keeps Faith with no Body—He is a Son of the Revolution, but damns his Mother; he hangs by a Bad Cause, but will never hang for a good Cause; he caresses them he hates—abhors his Benefactors, and betrays those that trust him—He renounces what he chooses, abjures that he cleaves to, and damns himself if he keeps his Oath—When he swears to be true, you are to take him *Equivocally*, when he abjures *Ironically*, and when he declares himself *Hypocritically*."

(*The Review*, Vol. VI, Facsimile Book 16;
January 5, 1709, pp. 465-466).

A GOOD MINISTER OF STATE OR A
PERFECT COUNSELLOR

"... to Judge of State Affairs, to be a *great and good Minister and Counsellour*, requires a *Capacity, Penetration*, and other Qualities which these Gentlemen have never been Eminent for. The *Qualities* requisite to make a *Perfect Counsellour*, are indeed very Numerous, tho' they may be reduc'd under



these four Heads : Capacity, Integrity, Courage, and Application."

(*Rogues on Both Sides*, pp. 30-31).

De Foe explains Capacity as Justness and Firmness of Wit or Genius : Solidity of Judgment; a moderate Degree of Learning—Constancy, Deliberation and Modesty—excluding Pride, obstinate "Opiniatreture", and Verbosity ; Integrity as Conscience and Religion. He next tells us what he means by Courage :

"Courage, is what we call *Resolution*, to despise Danger, and support with Constancy any Evil that befals us : it is always accompany'd with *Probity* and *Wisdom* ; and whatever those advise, THIS *maintains* in spight of all the bold Efforts of the *noisie*, *Factionous*, and turbulent *Bravo's* of Parties."

(*Rogues on Both Sides*, pp. 32-33).



CHAPTER VI

"THE ISLAND OF ST. VINCENT"

"I must beg my reader's indulgence, being the most immethodical writer imaginable. It is true I lay down a scheme, but fancy is so fertile I often start fresh hints, and cannot but pursue them ; pardon therefore, kind reader, my digressive way of writing, and let the subject, not the style or method, engage thy attention".

—*Augusta Triumphans*, p. 27.

De Foe started the *Review* in February, 1704. His main concern in it was with political and economic matters but a section of his journal to which he gave the name of *Mercure Scandale*; OR *Advice from the Scandalous Club* was designed for reflections on social and individual conduct, and for stories, usually told with a definite moral end. The *Review* gave him not only facility in writing a straightforward style but it also led him to tell stories and allegories, and write character-sketches into which a mind laden with observations naturally overflowed. In fact his journalistic career was a period of unconscious probation ; for it was now that he mastered all the secrets of his craft. It is, however, curious to note that he was as well able to tell a story in 1704 as at a later date. But at this date he was already author of some fifty books and pamphlets, according to the *Cambridge Bibliography*, including the *Essay upon Projects* and *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* and as a writer he did not lack practice.

To illustrate his power as a story-teller we may take his allegory of Modesty which appeared in the "Advice from the Scandalous Club" in the



Review for August 8, 1704. The points which call for special comment in this allegory are the ability to create and sustain interest, the pictorial imagination which adds vividness to the narrative, the careful construction with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and the didacticism which in De Foe's stories is a persistent factor. A successful allegory is a successful story in the first instance, and a good allegorist, therefore, presupposes a good story-teller, which De Foe undoubtedly is.

The allegory begins on a note, familiar to all students of De Foe—it is the strangeness of some circumstance; in the present context, a young lady "in a very strange condition":

"There was a young Lady brought before the Society this Week, in a very strange Condition, the Mob took her up for a Mad-woman, but it soon appeared she was not a Lunatick". Then follows the vivid detail:

"She was so thin she look'd like a Spectrum, that some people were afraid, she was a Ghost; by her Mien she appeared well bred; and something of Quality was to be discern'd by her very out-side; she had very good Cloaths on, but all out of Fashion, and she would by no means let her Face be seen; she had been taken up sitting all alone, upon a bench by Rosamond's Pond, in the Park, sighing as if she would break her Heart, and People fancied she waited an opportunity to drown herself".

The reaction of the club—from rough treatment to submission induced by the majesty of her countenance is intended to represent the right attitude towards the lady, an acknowledgement of



the fact that virtue has a sovereign power over human beings :

"The Club were strangely put to it what to do with her, they began to be rough with her, but the handsomness of her Behaviour told them presently she did not deserve it, so they intreated her to let them see her Face.

The whole Society were amazed when they saw her, the extraordinary sweetness and Majesty of her Countenance astonished them ; and not expecting to find such a Face, under such a Dress, they ask'd her if she would please to give any Account of her self"—

The realistic practical manner brings us back to the story which we follow with interest; and we are introduced to some common vices of the day :

"She spoke low, but freely enough, and told them she would.

First she told them she was born not far off from—, that her Father took a disgust at her, because she affronted a Drunken Gentleman who offered her some Incivillities, and keeping an ill Woman in the House, he turn'd her out of Doors".

She comes from her Northern home to London where she gets a cold reception :

"She came up to *London*, and would have waited upon a certain Dutchess, but as soon as she hear'd her Name, her Grace told her she was not fit for her service ; she applied her self after that, to abundance of Ladies of Quality, but none would Entertain her ; so she took Lodgings in the City, and liv'd by her self".

She herself is surprised by the indifference shown to her :

"As soon as she appeared abroad a little, she wondered what was the Matter none of the City Ladies would keep her Company ; she went to the *Exchange*, none of the Shopkeepers would say, what d'ye lack Madam ; if she went to a Church, or Meeting-House, nobody would open a Pew to her, or ask her to sit down. . . ."

Women are especially rude to her though men are not much better :

"She met with Affronts at the Corner of every Street, but especially from those of her own Sex ; at last she came to the Park, and there she found it was the same thing, the Ladies kept all on the other side of the *Mall*, and would not be seen—so much as to come near her. Some few incivilities she met with in the Park from the Men, which disordered her not a little. . . . My L- M- of -Assaulted her, but as soon as he knew her, he beg'd her Pardon, and told her, he never meddled with any of her Name, and so left her. . . .

And thus she went on, till tired and disconsolate, she sat down to rest her self on the Bench, where she was taken, by the Pond".

Our curiosity is now wrought to the highest pitch and we wonder who she could be :

"This Discourse put the Society upon longing to know who she was, She told them she came of an Antient Family in the North, but all her Relations were extinct, now she was the last of her House, and afraid she should be the last in the Nation, and her Name was *Modesty*.



The Society immediately rose up at the mention of her Name, and all of them paid her the Respect due to her Quality, offered to send a Guard with her to her Lodgings, and told her, They were sorry her Ladyship was •grown so much *out of fashion*''.

The allegory is told with perfect economy and reveals a sense of form which, with the exception of *Robinson Crusoe* we do not find in the novels in anything like the same measure. We find an equal degree of conscious art in *A True Relation of the Apparition of Mrs. Veal* (1706), now proved to be no invention of De Foe's¹. But he cast it into its shape, told it in his own words and gave it an internal verisimilitude so that we do not have to ask any one for confirmation of the facts; the suspension of disbelief is complete. Our author's genius working within the four corners of a reported incident shows to greater advantage than if he had been free to invent. In the *Apparition of Mrs. Veal* De Foe is indeed a reporter but a reporter of genius who realized the close connexion between an incident and the context where it could fit in appropriately. The objective reality in such a case cannot be convincing without a subjective basis, without an atmosphere where even a ghost does not strike one as improbable. The apparition came at a moment when Mrs. Bargrave had composed herself as it were for a supernatural ministration. The following passage gives us the

¹ G. A. Aitken, De Foe's Apparition of Mrs. Veal, *The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1895; Sir C. H. Firth—De Foe's True Relation of the Apparition of Mrs. Veal, *The Review of English Studies*, January, 1931; Dorothy Gardiner—What Canterbury Knew of Mrs. Veal, *The Review of English Studies*, April, 1931.



atmosphere into which the apparition is ushered with the striking of the clock :

"In this House, on the Eighth of September last, *viz.*, 1705, she (Mrs. Bargrave) was sitting alone in the Forenoon, thinking over her Unfortunate Life, and arguing her self into a due Resignation to Providence, tho' her condition seem'd hard. And said she, *I have been provided for hitherto, and doubt not but I shall be still, and am well satisfied, that my Afflictions shall end, when it is most fit for me* : And then took her Sewing-Work, which she had no sooner done, but she hears a Knocking at the Door ; she went to see who it was there, and this prov'd to be Mrs. Veal, her Old Friend, who was in a Riding Habit : At that Moment of Time, the Clock struck Twelve at Noon".²

We have already seen De Foe's dramatic power in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*³, where we have a High Flyer depicted to the life. The following passage shows the rankling memories at the root of the High Flying attitude :

"One would think the Dissenters should not have the Face to believe, that we are to be wheedl'd and canted into Peace and Toleration, when they know that they have once requited us with a civil War, and once with an intollerable and unrighteous Persecution for our former Civillity".⁴

² The True Relation etc. (Contained in the volume "The Fortunate Mistress, vol. II), pp. 236-237, Shakespeare Head Edition.

³ See, ante, chapter V.

⁴ The Shortest Way with the Dissenters, p. 118.



From this passage we go on by easy stages without any shock or surprise to the plea for a policy of extermination in support of which scriptural authority is cited with gusto :

"Moses was a merciful meek Man, and yet with what Fury did he run thro' the Camp, and cut the Throats of three and thirty thousand of his dear *Israelites*, that were fallen into Idolatory ; what was the reason ? 'twas Mercy to the rest, to make these be Examples, to prevent the Destruction of the whole Army".

The following story which appeared in the *Review* for December 14, 1710, also bears testimony to his dramatic power. It has a didactic purpose and is told to illustrate Solomon's saying, "Answer not a Fool in his Folly".

"A certain grave Lady of my Acquaintance, having taken something very ill, tho' not with much Cause, from a Gentleman, and meeting him at a Place where she had an opportunity, fell foul on him in a very Furious manner—Not without great Breach of Decency ; and letting her Passion fly at Random, she charg'd him with several Things, of which he was perfectly Innocent, and could with ease, have Vindicated him self—As often as he could get interval enough for so much speaking, he put in this grave Question, *Have you done Madam?* No, *she said*, she had not done, she would tell him his own—And on she goes again with it, till she began to blow ; and then, *Have you done Madam?* Says the Gentlemen ; after several of these Questions, at last he brought her to a Period, having exhausted her Rage ; and she answers, *Yes I have done,*

* The Shortest Way with the Dissenters, p. 127.



What can you say for your self? The Gentleman makes her a low Bow, and says, *Good b'w'y to ye Madam*, and so turn'd away and left her—The Lady took it for such an un-sufferable Affront, that to this Day, which is above 20 Years, she has not quite been reconcil'd, tho' the rest of the Quarrel, has long ago been forgotten”*.

De Foe recognized the dramatic value of dialectal and other peculiarities of speech and used them for characterisation. The following dialogue which occurs in the *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland* (1717) is quoted below as illustration of the use of dialect by him. The passage is significant, and seems to have influenced Scott in his creation of Cuddie Headrigg in *Old Mortality* which is a testimony of the highest value to De Foe's ability to depict “local” character. The country man in the dialogue escapes by his shrewdness the long arm of the law against Covenanters :

Sold. Hold, Sir, ye mon no gang frae me, I have muckle Business at you.

C. Man. Well, What's Your Will then?

Sold. I fear ye are one of the Bothwell-Brigg-men. What say ye to that?

C. Men. Indeed no, Sir, I am not.

Sold. Well, but I mon speir some Questions at you; and ye's answer me right, ye and I'll be good Friends again.

C. Man. What Questions will ye ask at me?

Sold. First, Sir, Will ye pray for the King?

C. Man. Indeed, Sir, I will pray for all good Men. I hope ye think the King a good Man, or ye wou'd not serve him.

* Review, December 14, 1710, p. 450; Facsimile Book No. 18.



Sold. Indeed do I Sir, I think him a good man, and ye are all wicked that wo' not pray for him.

* By this Time the poor Man began to see the Soldier was not designing to hurt him, and he took the Hint, and was encouraged to answer as he did.

*But what say you then to the Business of *Bothwell-Brigg*— Was not *Bothwell-Brigg* a Rebellion?

C. Man. I wot not weel what to say of *Bothwell-Brigg*: But and they took up Arms there against a good King, without a good Cause, it mun be Rebellion, I'll own that.

Sold. Nay, then, I hope thou and I'se be Friends presently, I think thou'l be an honest Man. But they have kill'd the Archbishop of St. *Andrews*, honest Man: O that was a sore Work, What say you to that, was not that Murder?

C. Men. Alas poor Man! and ha' they kill'd him! Truly and he were an honest Man, and they have kill'd him without any Cause, *Weel I wot* it mun be Mu~~ther~~; What else can I call it?

Sold. Weel hast thou said, Man: Now I have een but one Question More, and ye and I'se take a Drink together. *Will ye renounce the Covenant?*

C. Man. Nay, but now I mun speir at you too, and ye like. There are twa Covenants, Man, which of them do you mean?

Sold. Twa Covenants, say you, what are they?

C. Man. There's the Covenant of Works, Man, and the Covenant of Grace.



Sold. Fou fa me, and I Ken, Man ; but een renounce ane of them I am satisfy'd.

C. Man. With au my Heart, Sir, Indeed I renounce the Covenant of Works with au my Heart.

Upon this Dialogue, if the Story be true, the Soldier let the poor Man pass.””

From these considerations of De Foe's narrative and dramatic powers we pass on to an analysis of an example of his free invention and to see what elements present in it are subsequently used by him as a novelist.

The Imaginary Destruction of the Isle of St. Vincent, published in *Mist's Journal* for July 5, 1718^s is a masterly example of De Foe's creative imagination and its technique is an excellent introduction to that of the novels. It contains most of the elements we see him using in *Robinson Crusoe* and other works of fiction. De Foe starts his fascinating account by emphasizing the public importance of the news he is about to communicate, the urgency of which has prior claims on his attention. In this way he creates an illusion of reality which he strengthens as the description proceeds. It is the desolation of the Island of St. Vincent by the immediate hand of nature to which he is alluding—an incident, he goes on to remark, “the like of which never happened since the creation or at least, since the destruction of the Earth by Water in the General Deluge”. His next business is to prove its authenticity which he does by speaking of the letters that had been pouring in upon him containing accounts of the catas-

⁷ Memoirs of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, D. M'Leod & Son, 1844, pp. 85-86.

⁸ Lee, vol. II, pp. 48-55 ; the title is chosen by Lee.



trophe, but which, if published as they arrived, would neither be clear nor readable.

"We have therefore thought it better to give the substance of this amazing Accident in one collection, making together as full and as distinct account of the whole, as we believe is possible to come at by any intelligence whatsoever".

The destruction of the island took place on the 26th March but it is not merely a mass of earth that was destroyed. We learn that the island is "about eight leagues in length, and six in breadth". It has high mountains and plains which grow fruits.

"The Caribians (who are the local inhabitants) have many fair Villages, where they live pleasantly, and without any disturbance"

and do trade in a small way. In exchange for their own produce they take wedges, hooks and other implements. It is a small community, primitive, but prosperous and happy, and unless we saw this picture of flourishing villages in the foreground, the account that follows, terrifying as it may still be, would lose half its significance. The destruction is so awful because it also meant the ruin of human lives and hopes.

The suddenness of the calamity astonishes us still further. A French sloop passed the island on the 22nd March and bought fish from the natives but there was no sign of the approaching doom—"all was safe and in good condition" yet omens were not wanting for those who could understand them. For the Caribians talked to the sailors of the earthquakes which had been going on for some time and which frightened them terribly. Human calamities are often heralded by signs whose full



import does not appear until things are past remedy and De Foe by this appeal to experience has greatly heightened the realistic effect of his description.

"On the 27th, in the Morning, the Air was darkened in a dreadful manner; which darkness by all accounts seems to have extended over all the Colonies and Islands which were within 100 miles of the place; but was perceived to be more or less dark as those Islands were farther or nearer from the Place.

"But that which is most remarkable of all, is, that at some of the Islands, and at Martinico in particular, a dreadful Flash of Lightning as they call'd it, was seen on the 26th about Eleven o'clock at Night".

An impenetrable darkness overhung the sky the next morning :

"in the afternoon they were surpriz'd with the falling of something upon them as thick as smoke, but fine as dust, and yet solid as sand; this fell thicker and faster as they were nearer or farther off,—some Ships had it nine inches, others a foot thick,—upon their Decks; the Island of Martinico is covered with it at about 7 to 9 inches thick; at Barbadoes it is frightful, even to St. Christophers it exceeded four inches; it is fallen over the whole extent of the Isle of Hispaniola, and there is no doubt but it has been seen on the Continent of New Spain, about the point of Guiana, or the mouth of the Oronoco".

The falling of fine dust continued for two or three days and nights and there was no clue to this mysterious phenomenon until all of a sudden the explanation was discovered, filling everybody with



amazement. And news arrived in England also "that on the said 26th about Midnight, the whole Island of St. Vincent rose up into the Air, with a most dreadful eruption of fire from underneath the Earth, and an inconceivable Noise in the Air at its rising up; that it was not only blown up, but blown out of the very sea, with a dreadful force, as it were torn by the Roots, or blown up from the Foundation of the Earth".

Full details are now given. The mystery of the falling dust is explained. It is solid matter pulverised that fell in a shower of sand and the rocks which were flung up to a great height fell later into the sea with

"a Noise or Blow, equal to that of the loudest Cannon the several Reports, or Blows, which were heard even to St. Christopher's Island (which is a vast distance from that of St. Vincent), and of which the people in these Islands, as well as in the Ships, heard about a thousand or twelve hundred distinct Blows or Reports, and supposed it to be the Noise of Guns".

As soon as the cause of what was seen and heard was ascertained to be "an eruption of the Earth at the Island of St. Vincent", sloops, barks, and other small vessels came from all parts to make enquiries and discover the extent of the damage but they did not see any vestige of the island and wandered about, thinking that they had made a mistake about its situation; but in the end they were all fully satisfied, "that the said Island was *no more*;—that there appeared no Remains, except three little Rocks,—no, not any Tokens—that such an Island had been there". An explanation of the catastrophe now follows. What had happened at St. Vincent could not be



the result of an earthquake, although history gives examples of lands that had risen from the sea or had gone down into it by its means. • For St. Vincent did not go down but was blown up into the air to a prodigious height. There were people, De Foe remarks, who tried to discover the weight of the earth blown up in order to measure the force necessary for the purpose, and his comment is that this is a “perfectly needless Enquiry, and many Ways impracticable”. He would also refrain from speaking of infinite Power in seeking an explanation but would confine himself to “natural and probable Causes” for this “terrible Irruption in Nature”. One explanation he suggests may be the presence of sulphurous and nitrous particles in the subterranean caverns of the earth “of which some might happen to be under this Island” (Britain), exploding by contact with air; or the eruption might be caused by sea water pouring in on subterranean fires, whose existence is proved by hot springs and volcanoes, by means of an earthquake opening a channel for it. What steam can do is now suggested by familiar instances and anecdotes. If water is thrown into a Brewer’s Furnace, it may blow up all above it. The Foundry at Windmill-Hill by Moorfields received about a gallon of water “yet it blew up the whole Work, and blew the melted Metal up, as light as if it had been the lightest Earth, throwing it about the whole Place, separated in small parts like Drops, so that it overwhelmed as with a Shower of Molten Brass, those that were near, and almost all who were in the Place were either kill’d or terribly hurt with it”.

An analysis shows the presence of the following elements in the description :

1. Strangeness of the incident ; 2. Remote-ness of the Scene (West Indies) ; 3. Visual Ima-



gination ; 4. Attempt to prove the authenticity of the account ; 5. Circumstantial detail ; 6. Imaginative Realism ; 7. Rational attitude (in the explanations offered) ; 8. Anecdotes ; 9. Geographical and other knowledge.

The strangeness of the eruption "the like of which never happened since the Creation" is for De Foe the single motive to write about it. In all his stories, the strangeness of adventure and often of scene is an important element and the word "strange" appears as part of the title of *Robinson Crusoe* on which he was probably engaged at this time. His stories relate things which are no part of ordinary human experience ; the voyages, the fights with pirates, the cannibal invasions of the desolate island ; Singleton's march over 1800 miles through deserts where wild animals howl through the night ; London desolated by Plague. Even the lives of Colonel Jack, Moll Flanders, and Roxana are fraught with strange incidents. Part of the strangeness of the adventures arises from their setting in remote countries and seas. The desert island is situated at the mouth of the Orinoco, mentioned in this description of St. Vincent. Crusoe's travels by land and sea over most of the world ; Singleton's piracies and travels ; Colonel Jack and Moll Flanders in the American plantations, Roxana in France, Italy and Holland. De Foe travelled the whole world in his imagination, and no doubt found it an exciting experience.

The visual imagination to which *The Imaginary Description* bears testimony is its most marked characteristic, and is a strong link with the novels. The destruction of the island is in fact suggested by a series of pictures and we can see with De Foe how the smiling hamlets scattered at the foot of hills and on their slopes are suddenly sent flying through space like rockets in a blaze of

blinding light which pierces the heart of night. The dreadful flash of lightning, the deep impenetrable darkness, the rain of sand, the horizon on fire; the sloops, barks and other vessels cruising about in the silent sea; the three small rocks and then coming back to the explanation, we can see the raging fire under the earth on which the sea water rushes impetuously. Even the anecdote suggests pictures.

The most persistent impression that we carry away after a reading of the novels is an impression of De Foe's visual imagination. In *Robinson Crusoe*, the most outstanding example is the figure of Crusoe in his goatskin clothes with the umbrella bending over the foot-print in the sand.⁹ There are others in the same novel which also testify to this gift, and if they are less striking than the foot-print, they nevertheless show a close kinship with it. Crusoe engaged in cutting down some wood, looked into a kind of hollow place, behind a very thick underwood and “saw two broad shining Eyes of some Creature, whether Devil or Man I knew not, which twinkl'd like two Stars, the dim Light from the Cave's Mouth shining directly in and making the Reflection”¹⁰. It is only the eyes of a dying goat that he saw in the cave which he explored more carefully the next day with “six large candles of my own making”. He had to creep on all fours to enter the caye.

“I was oblig'd to creep upon all Fours, as I have said, almost ten yards; which by the way, I thought was a Venture bold enough, considering that I knew not how far it might go, nor what was beyond it. When I was got through the Strait, I found the Roof rose

⁹ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 177.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 205.



higher up, I believe near twenty Foot; but never was such a glorious Sight seen in the Island, I dare say, as it was, to look round the Sides and Roof of this Vault, or Cave; the Walls reflected 100 thousand Lights to me from my two Candles¹¹"

Horrible also is the sight of "nine naked Savages, sitting round a small Fire, they had made, not to warm them . . . but as I suppos'd to dress some of their barbarous Diet, of humane Flesh, which they had brought with them"¹². Friday kneeling down to Crusoe, begging in his language to be saved, is a picture one does not easily forget¹³. There are quieter pictures like Crusoe listening to his old father, confined to his room by the gout¹⁴, or Crusoe dining with the Dog at his right hand, the two cats, one on one side of the table, and one on the other, and Poll enjoying the privilege of talking to him¹⁵. There is a long description of himself, looking formidable in the goatskin clothes, goatskin umbrella with a saw on one side and hatchet on the other, a basket on his back, and a gun on his shoulder¹⁶, which is vivid and amusing. In *A Journal of the Plague Year*, we have no end of gruesome pictures¹⁷. In the *Memoirs of a Cavalier* we have the dream symbolism of a man beating a kettle-drum under the window shortly before the cavalier's birth¹⁸. The most arresting passage in *A New Voyage Round The World* is the one where the traveller raises his host by the cry of "Fire!",

¹¹ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, pp. 206-207; Crusoe carried six candles but he lighted only two of them.

¹² Ibid., p. 211.

¹³ Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., vol. I, p. 171.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁷ The element of imagination in the "Journal" has been discussed in Chapter I above.

¹⁸ Memoirs of a Cavalier, p. 1.

mistaking the flames of an active volcano which strangely illuminated the whole region by its flashes. There are hundreds of examples of our author's visual imagination in *Colonel Jack*, *Moll Flanders*, and *The Fortunate Mistress* which it would take too long to notice. Other forms of imagination are also noticeable but except in the *Journal* they are not so well marked. In *Robinson Crusoe* there is a passage, which is among those most worthy of notice, where De Foe is only considering the social aspect of sound and it is not, therefore, a proof of his capacity to represent sound as successfully as he does scene. Crusoe has just heard Friday speak to him and he remarks :

“upon this he spoke some Words to me, and though I could not understand them, yet I thought they were pleasant to hear, for they were the first sound of a Man's Voice, that I had heard, *my own excepted*, for above Twenty-Five Years”¹⁹.

The power of visual imagination is recognised by De Foe in the following passage :

“There are some secret moving Springs in the Affections, which when they are set a going by some Object in view; or be it some Object, though not in view, yet rendered present to the Mind by the Power of Imagination, that Motion carries out the Soul by its Impetuosity to such violent eager embracings of the Object, that the Absence of it is insupportable”²⁰.

In *The Island of St. Vincent* we have evidence that while De Foe uses his visual imagination like a master, he is not so certain in his touch when,

¹⁹ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 236.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.



for example, he describes sound—the single flash that demolished the island made a perfect picture but there were 1,000 to 1,200 blows or reports, supposed to be the noise of guns. They were in fact caused by the rocks which fell from the mid air. To elucidate the point it is necessary to quote a passage to which reference has been made above²¹.

"The more solid parts of this Land, which were lifted up by this Blast, and suppos'd to be of Stone, Slate or Clay, or such solid Matter as would not dissipate or separate in the Air, like the rest, being lifted to an immense height, and then plunging, by a mighty Force, received by their own weight, into the sea, must of necessity make a Noise, or Blow, equal to that of the loudest Cannon, and perhaps to Thunder itself; and these we think to be the several Reports, or Blows, which were heard even to St. Christopher's Island . . . and of which the People in these Islands, as well as in the Ships, heard about a thousand or twelve hundred distinct Blows or Reports, and supposed it to be the Noise of Guns"²².

The criticism of this description is that the rocks could hardly fall consecutively so as to produce such a large number of distinct noises. They could not stay suspended in the sky and drop one by one. We could hardly expect a queue in such a chaos, and De Foe goes entirely wrong in speaking of a thousand or more distinct noises from the falling of blocks of stone. He is apparently less alert in imagining a sound than in imagining a scene. The only exception to this general state-

²¹ See also Chapter I above.

²² Lee, vol. II, p. 52.

ment is to be found in *A Journal of the Plague Year* where he makes us see and hear with equal success. The explanation may be that he was there relying on his memory for the reconstruction of a scene in which sound played no less a part than sight²³.

The claim of authenticity is also made in all the novels which follow the autobiographical manner. De Foe sustains the claim with great skill. In this account of the destruction of St. Vincent, the authenticity is suggested by a reference to letters with somewhat conflicting reports of which a rational summary is supposed to be offered. And the air of truthfulness is greatly enhanced by the statement, quietly slipped in, that some men were trying to calculate the force required for the terrible upheaval by an attempt to measure the weight of the earth shot out of the sea by the eruption. The description is not in the least long-winded and there is scarcely a word or phrase that could be deleted without harm to the whole. In the novels De Foe is, however, frequently repetitive. This is part of his technique for giving the stories an air of veracity and suspending disbelief.

Another important element in this description is the use of circumstantial detail seen in the minuteness of the account relating to the fall of dust from a thickness of a foot to four inches. De Foe is always full of such details. Is it a theft? We are immediately told the amount stolen to a penny. Is it bread-making or the making of an umbrella in *Robinson Crusoe* and we learn what were the processes required for the purpose. The exactness and circumstantiality of his descriptions

²³ The question has been fully discussed in Chapter I above.



may partly be accounted for by the tradesman's habit of keeping precise inventories, as already seen (Chapter III) but there is no doubt that it is also partly the result of his strong visual imagination which enabled our author not only to give us memorable pictures but prosaic little details whose function seems to be to enhance the effect of reality. These details may also be regarded as a means employed by De Foe to strike a balance between cause and effect, testifying to his strong sense of fact. The thefts of money and valuables were possible only because of the carelessness of the owners which therefore was the cause of the loss suffered. Colonel Jack steals a pocket-book, containing diamonds, cash and bills of immense value, but he could do so owing to the carelessness of the gentleman he robbed :

"This careless Way of Men putting their Pocket-books into a Coat Pocket, which is so easily div'd into by the least Boy that has been us'd to the Trade, can never be too much blam'd ; the Gentlemen are in great Hurries, their Heads and Thoughts entirely taken up, and it is impossible they should be guarded enough against such little Hawksey'd Creatures as we were²⁴.

After stealing a gold necklace from a child returning home by herself from a Dancing School, Moll Flanders makes the following reflections :

"... as I did the poor Child no harm, I only thought, I had given the Parents a just Reproof for their Negligence, in leaving the poor Lamb to come home by it self, and it would teach them to take more Care another time"²⁵.

²⁴ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 53.

²⁵ Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 8.

We have in this account of St. Vincent proof of what may be called De Foe's imaginative realism in the reference to “the three little rocks” as the only remains of the island blown off by the eruption. This is the same type of imagination that conceived of the foot-print in the sand in *Robinson Crusoe*. After reaching the island, Crusoe remarks that he did not see any of his comrades, who were all drowned—, “except three of their Hats, one Cap, and two Shoes that were not Fellows”²⁶. The wrecked Spanish ship which he visited towards the end of his stay in the island had only a dog in it : “Besides the Dog, there was nothing left in the Ship that had life”²⁷. These examples show that De Foe knew that terror, mystery and desolation dwelt in the odd, the fragmentary and the incomplete, which easily passes into the symbolical while the circumstantial method was better suited to more or less normal situations, and like the true artist that he was he knew when to don or doff the detailed manner.

De Foe gives a thoroughly rational explanation of what led to the destruction of the island. If the island had really been blown off, we feel it could have been in no otherwise than the way De Foe describes. In fact, Martinique passed through a catastrophe which reminded one of “the destruction of St. Vincent” and De Foe's explanation for it. The rational attitude which marks his enquiry into the cause of the disaster we also see in *Robinson Crusoe* when the foot-print in the sand is discovered. Crusoe indeed thought of the Devil as its author but he soon saw the error of such a supposition and concluded very sensibly that savages must have visited the island. Referring to the

²⁶ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 222.



comets which were popularly thought as forerunners and warnings of God's Judgement, the Saddler in *A Journal of the Plague Year* observes :

"But I cou'd not at the same Time carry these Things to the height that others did, knowing too, that natural Causes are assign'd by the Astronomers for such Things; and that their Motions, and even their Revolutions are calculated, or pretended to be calculated; so that they cannot be so perfectly call'd the Fore-runners, or Fore-tellers, much less the procurers of such Events, as Pestilence, War, Fire, and the like"²⁸.

Again, we have the following explanation for comets in De Foe's *System of Magic* :

"For as to the importance of them to human affairs . . . they have no import or signification at all, other than that sometimes, by their near approach to the earth, and by their attraction, or by their dissipation of moist vapours, they occasion sometimes great drought, and insupportable heat; and at other times, distilling great unusual rains, by condensing it in an extraordinary manner, the vapour which by their acquired heat they have exhaled"²⁹.

It will not be necessary to give more illustrations of the rational temper of De Foe which led him to avoid in many cases the popular superstitious view regarding the relation of cause and effect and to seek his explanations in a spirit of true enquiry, confining himself to natural causes which are capable of explanation.

²⁸ *A Journal of the Plague Year*, p. 24.

²⁹ *A System of Magic*, Oxford, 1840, vol. XII (Edition attributed to Scott), p. 103.

The next point to note is the use of anecdotes by our author. In *The Imaginary Destruction*, there is a reference to the blowing up of a foundry near Moorfields as a result of some water that fell there. The reference to this incident is made to show the destructive power of steam. De Foe's anecdotal manner redeems his political and economic writings from the oblivion to which otherwise they might have been consigned and it is significant in his evolution as a novelist. For he found in anecdotes one of the means of developing his artistic powers and of expressing the peculiarities of character and situation that he had observed. As an example of his habit of telling anecdotes we may refer to his account of two men, Jack and Tom, who after settling to go a journey, fall out in the middle of it as to their destination, Jack bullying his friend into accepting his decision to go to York³⁰. This is offered as an allegory of Britain's position in the War in not being able under pressure of her allies to conclude a separate peace.

The last point in our discussion is the use of geographical knowledge made by De Foe. It is proved not only by the fact that what he wrote about the physical features of the island of St. Vincent and of its neighbourhood is generally in accord with the actual circumstances but also by the fact that the island has a volcano, the Souffrière which was, for example, in eruption in May, 1902, shortly before St. Pierre in Martinique and one-tenth of the island besides were destroyed by the eruption of Mont Pelé on May 8 of the year. It was a terrible disaster by which 40,000 lives were lost³¹ and some of the circumstances, like the falling of ashes, attending it reminded one of De

³⁰ Review, June 10, 1712, pp. 763f, vol. VIII.

³¹ Ency. Brit., vol. 14, p. 992 (14th Edition).



Foe's St. Vincent. One is also reminded of the causes he offered as explanation. De Foe's imagination thus works on material which he obtained by his wide reading, and if discrepancies occur in the island part of *Robinson Crusoe*³² and in the journey across China and Russia, this does not alter the fact that his knowledge of geography is often effectively employed by him in his fiction. The union of knowledge and imagination which we see in *St. Vincent* is also impressive in his novels where he describes remote countries with such thoroughness that until Professor A. W. Secord published his *Studies in the Narrative Method of Defoe*, it was commonly believed that the account of Singleton's journey across the deserts to Mozambique had actually thrown new light on African geography³³.

De Foe, it may be noted, pretended to write about the destruction of the Isle of St. Vincent because it was the news of the day. Here we find a link with his stories of rogues and highwaymen whose exploits figured prominently in the news of his time and suggested to the journalist the subject matter of some of his novels.

To the question, why did he write about the outcasts of society, the answer as already suggested, would be that the subject possessed immediate interest for the public of his day.

The City Marshall in London made a statement in 1718 to the following effect :

"It is the General complaint of the Taverns and Coffee-houses, the Shop-keepers and others that many of their customers were

³² Paul Dottin. L'Ile de Robinson, Mercure De France, 15 November, 1922, Tome CLX, pp. 112-119.

³³ Studies in the Narrative Method of Defoe, p. 136, The University of Illinois, 1924 ; See above, chapter II.

afraid when it is dark to come to their houses and shops, for fear that their hats and wigs should be snatched off from their heads, or their swords taken from their sides, or that they may be blinded, knock'd down, cut or stabbed”³⁴.

George II was robbed in Kensington Gardens³⁵. De Foe with his journalistic experience, was not likely to miss a topical subject. Rogue stories had, besides, an irresistible appeal for him. After the capture of Lewis Cartouche, he remarked in *Applebee's Journal* for October 21, 1721 :

“The whole talk of the City of Paris is upon the taking of that famous Rogue of all Rogues Lewis Cartouche, whose Enterprizes will supply • Posterity with subjects for more Romance than ever did that of the seven Champions, or Amadis of Gaul., Never any Robber that has been heard of has been equally daring, resolute, and successful”³⁶.

De Foe himself clearly admired a rogue for being daring, resolute, and successful, and we find him sympathising, no doubt on these grounds, with Rumbald who was concerned in the design to assassinate King Charles II in the Rye-House Plot. This is how he described the pursuit of Rumbald which led to his capture :

“Being discovered, and a troop of Dragoons surrounding the house he still retained the

³⁴ F. W. Chandler, Literature of Rogues, vol. I, p. 156; F. N. Hitchin, Discovery of the Conduct of Receivers and Thief-Takers.

³⁵ Charles C. F. Greville, Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Victoria, II, p. 215 (Longmans, 1885).

³⁶ See also, Lee, vol. II, p. 443.



greatness of his courage³⁷, and having so much time as to get his arms, and mount his horse, *boldly* set open the gates, and sallied out, firing his Carabin in the face of the first man that attempted to seize him, and knocking the second off his horse with the But-End of it³⁸.

Shepherd, Gow, Avery, and Wild possessed in varying degrees the attributes De Foe admired. But if their courage and resolution attracted him to these and other rogues whose stories he undertook to tell, he did not approve of their anti-social activities for the suppression of which he formulated a series of schemes³⁹. He tried to write about them with two clear aims; namely to prevent people from being led unwarily along these devious paths and to encourage those criminals punished by transportation to look forward to the happiness which a true reformation can produce when they learn to live by honest labour. The eventual punishment of Captain Jack⁴⁰ by death and of others is meant to be a warning to those who may be tempted to take the road, and Moll Flanders in Virginia⁴¹ as a transported felon is intended to put heart into those who find themselves under a sentence of transportation. De Foe had a clear moral purpose in these rogue stories but the storyteller's interest usually proved stronger than the desire to reform. In *Street Robberies Consider'd* the reformed thief who, in the shape of some Memoirs of his life, supplies us with the only

³⁷ The Italics are mine.

³⁸ Lee, vol. II, pp. 7-8.

³⁹ The subject has been discussed in Chapter IV above.

⁴⁰ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 141.

⁴¹ Moll Flanders, vol. II, pp. 149f.



completely satisfactory picaresque story that De Foe ever wrote, makes the following characteristic observation on Gay's *Beggar's Opera*:

"the *Beggars Opera*, in my Opinion, has been of Prejudice to the Public. Roguery there is set in such an amiable Light that vulgar Minds are dazzled with it; and the Author, I think, is punishable for not punishing the Persons in the Drama according to their Desert"⁴².

We may conclude that De Foe was led to write about rogues and highwaymen because of the topical interest in the subject; that the courage, resolution and success of the outcasts was admired by him; that he did not approve of their lawless activities and that unlike Gay in his *Beggar's Opera* he had a moral purpose which was to point out the danger that constantly threatened these men by way of conveying warning, and finally, he wanted to tell those who lay under a sentence of transportation—and their number was considerable—that the American plantations could easily help them to achieve both fortune and happiness by honest labour and they had, therefore, no reason to despair.

De Foe does not seem to have attempted writing a picaresque tale deliberately except once in *Some Memoirs of his Life* by a Converted Thief prefixed to his *Street Robberies Consider'd* (1728). We find picaresque elements in *Captain Singleton*, where we come across passages like the following describing Singleton's experiences in his boyhood

⁴² *Street Robberies Consider'd*, p. 48; See also, "Second Thoughts are Best", Novels & Miscellaneous Works, Scott, Oxford, 1841, vol. XVIII, p. 10.



when he had to stave off hunger by various devices :

"I was reputed as a mighty diligent Servant to my Master, and very faithful (I was diligent indeed, but I was very far from honest; however, they thought me honest, which by the Way, was their very great Mistake)"⁴³

Again,

"However, by this Means I had Opportunity particularly to take Care of my Master's Man, and to furnish my self with sufficient Provisions to make me live much better than the other People in the Ship; for the Captain seldom ordered any thing out of the Ship's Stores, as above, but I snipt some of it for my own Share"⁴⁴.

But if we search through his novels we shall not find much similarity between De Foe's conception of the rogue and that of Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza in his *Lazarillo De Tormes* which is a classic in the picaresque tradition and provides the model for fiction of this type. This is what the author purported to do in *Lazarillo* :

"The conception of the author, Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, was first to portray a boy, with everything against him, rising from the lowest rank of society to a prosperous condition, and to give a humorous account of his adventures; and secondly, to satirise certain types of men, the products of the age in which he wrote, through the medium of his boy hero"⁴⁵.

⁴³ Captain Singleton, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁵ The Life of Lazarillo De Tormes, Translated from the Edition of 1554 by Sir Clement Markham, K.C.B.,



Some Memoirs of a Converted Thief is on all fours with this conception of the Spanish classic. The unnamed hero who repented and turned honest had—

"borne all Offices in the Parish where I dwell, even Church-warden, without cheating the Poor, and am at present, and have been these twenty Years, accounted one of the honestest Men in it"⁴⁶.

His early life teemed with examples of a fertile wit applied to the end of stealing from, and getting the better of, other people. His mother, sent to Newgate as a thief, was a maiden but as she could escape punishment by the assistance of a Jury of Matrons only, she availed herself of this opportunity, and he was conceived in prison. When he was born, his father, an unascertained member of a group of eight pirates, had "all lovingly• swung together at *Execution Dock*, without leaving any Provision for their Posthumous Offspring; Peace be with them!"⁴⁷. Like Lazar⁴⁸ he starts his rogue tricks in his tenth year, robbing a fruit woman of 36 shillings "besides Half pence"⁴⁹. The young thief's next exploit was to remove two guineas from a table where a butcher was counting his money, by his light-fingered tricks :

"I cast a Hawk's Eye at the Guineas on the Table, and my Chops water'd at 'em much;

D.Sc. (Camb.), London, Adam and Charles Black 1908,
p. XXXI.

⁴⁶ Street Robberies Consider'd. . . . To which is prefix'd Some Memoirs of his Life, etc., p. 4, London, 1728.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁸ Lazarillo, p. XXI.

⁴⁹ Street Robberies, p. 13. This money he later returned to the woman like Colonel Jack restoring "22s. and 6d. Half-penny" to the poor woman he had robbed. (Jack, vol. I, pp. 100-101).



and at the same Time my Fingers itched to be better acquainted with 'em though I despair'd of getting an Opportunity. But the Landlord being call'd away in haste, threw down the Pen under the Table with his Elbow : and the *Butcher* stooping to take it up, I nimbly seiz'd one of the Guineas ; slipp'd it down between my Shirt and my Skin, retir'd to my Post and look'd as Demurely as a *Quaker* when the Spirit was expected to move him"⁵⁰.

Later he takes another guinea when the butcher looks under the table to see if the missing coin is dropped there by some chance, and makes off with the two pieces of gold without giving him an opportunity to discover that another guinea has also disappeared. He thrives very well, and his next victim is a gentleman who comes to an inn and entrusts him with a note for seventy pounds to convert it into cash. When he goes out on the errand, he takes a drawer with him from the inn to show that all is safe but has no difficulty in outwitting the poor creature and making the money his own.

The most amusing incident described in this picaresque tale is of a lewd Quaker merchant being stripped of his money and made to drink the cup of humiliation, apparently as a penalty for his unlawful passion. In reality, however, it was a case of pure blackmail but the infatuated man had no means of discovering so simple a trick put upon him in his bewildered condition. This Quaker—it is strange that De Foe should introduce a Quaker who suffers from a guilty passion⁵¹ had been paying court to the picaro's whore for several years but like a modest wife she had resisted his overtures

⁵⁰ Street Robberies, pp. 14-15.

⁵¹ See, Ezra Kempton Maxfield—"Daniel De Foe and the Quakers" PMLA vol. 47 (1932), pp. 179-190.

all along. At the particular date, however, the town being empty as the Queen was at the Bath where the fashionable world followed her, and business slack, our thief and his whore put their heads together to decoy the Quaker and fleece him. She now went to him and told him that her husband (“meaning my Worship, who by the by, had never troubled the Parson”)⁵² was out of town and that the late barbarities practised on her had shaken her loyalty so much that she could satisfy him in return for £50 and secrecy. He agreed and came punctually “as generally Whoremasters do”⁵³ and was plied with wine with which some opium was cleverly mixed, and he almost immediately after went to sleep in his arm chair. The supposed husband is now back on the scene, trying to waken him to no purpose;

“. . . however, I turn'd Valet for once; Strip'd him of all his Cloaths, and put him to Bed that he might not catch Cold”⁵⁴.

He got a great deal by a night's stage-management.

“. . . a Gold Watch, Seventy 'Guineas in Money, and a Bank Note of Eighty-Five Pound, which I went that Moment and Receiv'd at his own shop”⁵⁵.

The whore now waited to tell the Quaker when he woke that the outraged husband had gone to fetch officers to secure him. The poor man overpowered by fright fell into a swoon when he saw the husband.

“The Condition he was in could hardly restrain me from Laughter”⁵⁶.

⁵² Street Robberies, p. 26.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.,

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 28.



But he had to play his part.

"I storm'd so much about his Ears, that he seein'd to waken a small Part of his Senses. He fell down upon his Knees, and told me, I should have all he had in his Pockets, if I would mitigate my Rage, and not let his Disgrace be publish'd"⁵⁷.

Besides his other losses, he had to write a promissory note for £50 before he was let off. There is rollicking fun in the scene—the contrast between the reality and what is only supposed to be so, is the source of the comic enjoyment.

His next exploit also shows a considerable measure of resourcefulness. He was travelling with a sea Captain.

"He let us understand that he had a great deal of Money about him, yet hid so cunningly, he defy'd the Devil to find it out"⁵⁸.

This challenge put him on his mettle, and prying through the chink of the door, he saw that he kept his boots under his head. They were stopping at an inn where there were two carts loaded with hay. He set them on fire and before long the alarm was raised, and the Captain, frightened by the cry of "fire!" rushed out, half naked. The thief now removed the boots, slit them open and discovered 200 guineas lodged in the heels. The Captain raved and threatened when he saw his loss but the money was gone beyond recovery.

The thief's mother was executed at Tyburn for stealing a gold watch. He describes the incident with unfilial humour:

"My poor Mother was oblig'd to see what House-Keeping they kept at the Tenement

⁵⁷ Street Robberies, p. 28.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

where I was got ; and the ensuing Sessions she was advis'd to lay aside all thought of this World, and look a Squint on the next. She beg'd their Pardon, and told them Civilly she had no Thoughts that Way ; but for all that, they took an Occasion to carry her to St. *Tyburn*, where she made a very comfortable End⁵⁹.

He had to marry his whore under a mild threat of exposure but she died in less than four months after the legal union and in her death-bed she spoke so movingly about the life they had lived that he entirely left off his vile courses

“and tho' my Goods were ill got, yet Heaven prosper'd me in an honest Undertaking ; and it has been the Business of my Life upwards of twenty Years, as near as I could, to make Restitution for all my Rogueries. I now live honestly, and thank Heaven that has put me above Want”⁶⁰.

His marriage with his whore is not unlike Lazaro's marriage with the archpriest's mistress. Lazaro's mother gives him away in his tenth year to a blind man who promises to adopt him as his son, being unable herself to find the wherewithal to keep him. The mother of the writer of the *Memoirs* disposed of him in his infancy for the same reason and made some profit for herself out of the business. She put him into a hand-basket and tying him to the knocker of a door in Cornhill, withdrew to a distance to see what would happen.

“In a little Time, the Door was open'd, and I enter'd the House; but it was suppos'd, not liking my Situation, I began to Whindle, and

⁵⁹ Street Robberies, p. 24.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 48.



Tune my Pipes. When the inhabitants understood what Sort of Guest they had got, they began to be weary of my Company, imagining, if I call'd for anything (for it prov'd a Coffee-House), I should hardly pay 'em. Upon which they sent for the Constable and Churchwardens of the Parish, who maugre their wry Faces, were oblig'd to take Care of me. Upon the Bustle that was made, my Mother approach'd slily, to understand what she knew before; and when she was got among 'em she fell to abusing her self at no Rate, by calling the Mother of the Child, Barbarous Wretch! and Brute Beast! And many more elegant Names, as she inform'd me when I was grown up. In short, she said so much, that one of the Churchwardens took her side, and being a very Compassionate Man, told her, if she had a Mind to have me, I should prove a good Bargain, and immediately offer'd her ten Pounds upon the Nail, if she would take Care of my Education^{“”}¹.

These *Memoirs* have not been noticed by any critic in the past as an example of De Foe's contribution to picaresque fiction. The detailed analysis made above is intended to bring out the nature of De Foe's tale and its similarity with the Spanish classic. It will probably be clear that the English author set himself deliberately to write on the Spanish model and that his wit and invention are as entertaining as those in *Lazarillo*. It is interesting to note that the supposed author, a “Converted thief” follows up the memoirs with a scheme for the suppression of street robberies. The scene where he played a part with so many others and which could be so exciting and amusing would soon

¹ Street Robberies, pp. 10-11.

become a part of historical memory. De Foe seems to snatch from it a few things that will prove entertaining before finally bidding goodbye to his favourite art of story-telling.

A few remarks may now be appropriately made on De Foe's style, his methods as writer, his attitude to the reading public and his views on journalistic responsibility. He always practised and recommended a plain style⁶². His style in the novels has often a dramatic purpose. Referring to a dialogue in *The Family Instructor*⁶³, he remarks :

“There seems to be more circumlocutions in this dialogue than in any of the rest ; but they will be found not useful only, but necessary, at least to preserve the cadence of things, and introduce the substance of the real story by necessary gradations.” The repetitions in his novels, and in some places, long involved sentences seem thus deliberately employed for the purpose of characterization.

De Foe did not always adhere to any definite plan in writing his books as he confesses himself : “I must beg my reader's indulgence, being the most immethodical writer imaginable. It is true I lay down a scheme, but fancy is so fertile I often start fresh hints, and cannot but pursue them ; pardon therefore, kind reader, my digressive way of writing, and let the subject, not the style or method engage thy attention”⁶⁴. He was often careless. In a voluminous writer like De Foe this is almost unavoidable. He sometimes makes a statement which a few pages later he contradicts.

⁶² See ante, Chapter III.

⁶³ *The Family Instructor*, Oxford, 1841, vol. XV, p. 237. The reference is to dialogue III in part II.

⁶⁴ *Augusta Triumphans*, Oxford, 1841, vol. XVIII, p. 27.



In *Colonel Jack* it is stated on pages 5 and 6, Vol. I., that he learned nothing except to read and write before he was ten; on page 92, vol. I., Colonel Jack says he could not read; on page 189 that he had learned to read and write when he was in Scotland. Many contradictory statements have been pointed out in *Robinson Crusoe* since Gildon attacked the book. In *The Fortunate Mistress*, Roxana's husband, the Brewer is said to have been "killed in a Rencounter, as they call it, or accidental Scuffle among the Troopers"⁶⁵. Yet Roxana sends her maid Amy to France to make enquiries "After my Husband, who I left a Trooper in the Gensd'arms"⁶⁶, and Amy tells a different story about him:

"For that of *my Husband the Brewer*, she learn'd, that being commanded into the Field upon an Occasion of some Action in *Flanders*, he was wounded at the Battle of *Mons*, and died of his Wounds in the Hospital of the Invalids"⁶⁷.

In a long essay on Dullness published in the *Review* for August 18, 1711, De Foe discusses the relation between the author and the reading public. At the end of the essay, he sums up his observations as follows:

"1. Let an Author keep his Senses Waking when he writes, he will always be best liked by those, whose senses are awake when they read.

2. Authors should never value what men say of their writings, when they are Sleepy and dull, if that are awake approve of them.

3. The Duller we are when we read, the apter we are to call every thing we read Dull.

4. Every Reader ought to Enquire when he

⁶⁵ *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. I, p. 152.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 21.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41, vol. II.



reads, whether he is awake, and able to distinguish between the Dullness of the Writer and his own.

5. Things are generally dull or bright, rather in proportion to the Dullness and Quickness of him that reads than of him that writes."

It is interesting to note that he approximates to what is designated as the high-brow attitude in our time. He was also a great journalist and it is refreshing to see him opposed to any tendency to come down to the reader's level. There, too, he wanted to serve the cause of truth rather than cater to the unhealthy tastes of the public whom it was his business to guide, and when he saw a fellow journalist taking the law from the reading public, he became justly indignant :

"He (Dyer) does not so much write what his Readers should believe, as what they would believe—Not what is Fact, but what will please them This really is a most Excellent Satyr upon the present Times, when People are not so much Solicitous to be told what is *True*, as what really they would have be True, or what Clashes, Grates or Pinches the Party they are against, be it true or no"⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ Review, February 9, 1710, p. 527; Facsimile Book No. 16.



CHAPTER VII.

THE FAMILY INSTRUCTOR

We ought not to be too hasty to brand our brother for his sins, his infirmities, or misfortunes, since he that is dishonest in your eyes, by a casual or other crime which he commits, may rise from the disaster by a sincere repentance, and be to-morrow an honester man than thyself in the eyes of his Maker".

(*Serious Reflections*, G. A. Aitken,
vol. III, p. 43)

De Foe wrote a large number of didactic works. His usual practice is to tell a story to enforce a moral. Among books of this class, *The Use and Abuse of Married Bed* (originally published as *Matrimonial Lewdness*) will take high rank. Written in clear prose, the book tells us that it is a great sin to marry for money when the possibility of love does not exist on account of the pre-engaged affections of the man or the woman or of both. His vehemence suggests a personal experience; it reminds us that he also married money and suggests that he was not perhaps happy in wedlock. This is one of the many remarks he makes on the subject:

"This marrying without affection, or contrary to inclination, has a variety of complicated mischiefs attending it, and especially considering that, upon the least disagreeableness between the persons married, former objects and former thoughts revive in the mind; they are always comparing their condition with what it might have been, with what others are, and with what, at least, they fancy others are;

ever repining at what is, ever wishing what can never be”¹.

He calls such a marriage matrimonial whoredom. The marriage of a woman when she is past the age of child bearing is condemned by him and he disapproves of the union between persons of unequal social rank on account of the unhappiness that arises in many cases. He is extremely emphatic in his denunciation of pre-marital sexual relations, even on the promise of subsequent marriage.

De Foe was strongly opposed to occasional conformity by the Dissenters. Although he wrote many pamphlets in the course of a controversy which raged round the question and in which he played a leading part, he does not introduce the subject in any of his novels. It is, however, well to remember that although a Dissenter himself, he was by temperament more inclined to see the points that united the sects in the common worship of Christ than those that kept them apart. This would explain his liberal-minded references to the members of the Roman Catholic Church in *Robinson Crusoe*. The following passage would throw light on his attitude. This shows the line taken by Robinson Crusoe as the religious instructor of his man Friday :

“As to all the Disputes, Wranglings, Strife and Contention, which has happen’d in the World about Religion, whether Niceties in Doctrines, or Schemes of Church Government, they were all perfectly useless to us; as for ought I can yet see, they have been to all the rest of the World”².

¹ The Use And Abuse of Married Bed, p. 48, Works, Hazlitt, vol. III.

² Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 7.



De Foe, we know, was brought up in the Puritan tradition, and as a boy he once tried to copy out the Bible. Fear arose at the time that with the return of Popery under Charles II there would be an end of the true faith. We have in De Foe's own words an account of the Herculean labours he made out of his religious ardour :

"I my self, then, but a Boy, Work'd like a Horse, till I Wrote out the whole *Pentateuch*, and then was so tyr'd, I was willing to run the Risque of the rest"³.

This gives us a picture of the De Foe who was "set apart for sacred Employ" but also of a very sensible and not very fanatical De Foe! At a later date he dedicates his *Jure Divino* (1706) to Lady Reason as "the Almighty's Representative and Resident in the Souls of Men"⁴. With this devotion to Reason he combined a loyal Christianity.⁵ He wrote in the *Review*⁶ :

"I never see a Criminal go to the Gallows but I most seriously reflect I have as much deserv'd to go there as he, having been an Ungrateful Unthankful Dog, to a Bountiful Beneficent Creator, a Rebel to his Sacred Commands, a Resister of his Sovereign Grace, and a Rejecter of a Bleeding Saviour; and who am I that I should defend my self as Innocent? But as to Drunkenness, Whoring, Swearing, or any of the Crimes, which our Society pretends to Detect, I without Pride or Vanity, boast my self clear, and am bold to say, All the World cannot prove me Guilty".

³ Review, vol. II, p. 498; Wilson, vol. I, p. 7.

⁴ *Jure Divino*, Dedication, Hazlitt, vol. III.

⁵ Review, January 20, 1705, p. 383. His attitude in this respect is typical of the period.

The passage shows that the freedom from the common vices is quite different from the sense of sin which drives the Christian to seek the mercy of God. It also gives evidence of the large sympathy of our author which enabled him at a later date to write with truth and understanding of the abandoned men and women whom he had an opportunity of seeing at close quarters during his imprisonment at Newgate. And it provides a glimpse of his spiritual life whose history is perhaps fully told by him in the account of Crusoe's struggle in the solitary island.

II.

I shall now endeavour to discuss our author's didactic purpose in his novels with special reference to *Robinson Crusoe* and also give a brief review of his use of the supernatural.

The most persistent factor in De Foe's stories is their didacticism. He is not content with adorning the tale but must also point the moral. Towards the end of his long literary career, he set himself the task of describing the character of a good writer :

“In a Word, the Character of a *good Writer*, wherever he is to be found, is this, viz., that he writes so as to *Please* and *Serve* at the same time . . . the Writer that strives to be useful, writes to *serve* you, and at the same Time, by an imperceptible Art, draws you on to be *pleased* also. He represents Truth with *Plainness*, Virtue with *Praise*”⁶.

As a concession to “light-headed readers whose wits are too volatile”, he pretends to cut short a story

⁶ Universal Spectator, No. I, October 12, 1728 ; Lee, vol. III, pp. 467-468 .



he proposes to tell in *A System of Magic* (1728) because it will be "too grave for them" and adds,

"so to oblige folly, and I am sure to the dislike of the truly wise and solid heads, I leave off before I have done, that I may not abate that most fashionable custom of writing most of that which is pleasant, and least of that which is profitable".

In 1719 he wrote in *Mist's Journal* denouncing in strong terms what he calls "the Sodomy of the Pen",

"Hast thou heard, O Mist, thou Writer of Strange Things! I say, hast thou ever heard among the Roll of Sodom, crimes of the Sin of Curlicism? Know then, this is the Sodomy of the Pen; 'tis writing beastly Stories, and then propagating them by Print, and filling the Families, and the Studies of our Youth, with Books which no Christian Government that I have read of ever permitted".

The didacticism of De Foe is, however, nothing exceptional. As Leslie Stephen observes:

"one obvious characteristic of this generation is the didacticism which is apt to weary us. Poets, as well as philosophers and preachers, are terribly argumentative. Fielding's remark (through Parson Adams), that some things in Steele's comedies are almost as good as a sermon, applies to a much wider range of literature".

⁷ A System of Magic, p. 145, Oxford 1841, vol. XII (Scott).

⁸ Mist's Journal, April 5, 1719; Lee, vol. II, p. 32.

⁹ Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the 18th century, p. 74 (Duckworth, 1927).

De Foe's didacticism is thus a reflection of the practice of his age. As this provided him with the means of upholding juster standards in private morals, he did not scruple to use it for promoting the end which he found entirely compatible with his artistic purpose of pleasing and serving the reader.

De Foe believed that the immorality of his age could largely be corrected by the example of those in public authority. Precept alone has little force. This idea he discussed in *The Poor Man's Plea*

"Where (in) the Honest Poor Man protests against being set in the Stocks by a Drunken Justice; or Fin'd for Swearing, by a Magistrate, with a G-d D-n him, let the Dog pay for it"¹⁰ !

Quoting himself he shows what the remedy is for the vices of his day :

"Our Modes of Vice from high Examples came
And 'Tis Examples only, must reclaim,
You'll eas'ly Check the Vices of the Town,
Whene'er you please but to Suppress your
own"¹¹.

Besides being part of a literary heritage, didacticism for De Foe is also the outcome of a desire to provide suitable examples of vices and their reformation. The ordinary man is not easily moved by an appeal to reason and good sense. His eyes are opened by example, by stories of lives which show vice in its most unpleasing aspect. De Foe wrote with a deliberate reformative purpose and tried to instruct by the help of example. *The Scandalous Club* was devised for castigating vice : "and

¹⁰ Review, December 26, 1704, p. 353.

¹¹ Ibid.



whether Friend or Foe, one Party or another, if anything happens so scandalous, as to require an open Reproof, the World may meet with it there”¹². The vices that he attacks through the Scandalous Club in the *Review* are “Whoring, Drunkenness, Killing Folks, Duelling and the like”¹³. In the Preface to *The Family Instructor* he wrote :

“The whole work being designed both to divert and instruct, the author has endeavoured to adapt it as much as possible to both those uses”¹⁴. The book repeatedly emphasizes the moral even at the cost of the story, although it must be admitted, the pace of the dialogue in which the stories are cast, is sometimes quickened by the opposition of personalities, stubborn and unyielding in their views. One may be right to complain that the author in this work is more a preacher than a story-teller but the preaching seems to be both orthodox and sincere. He builds up the first dialogue and the final in this voluminous work on the scriptural words : “for out of the mouth of such as these he (God) has ordained praise”¹⁵. In each of the two stories it was a child who brought religion into the home and acted as an agent for the conversion of the father. De Foe’s child has also an observation. He tells his father that he believes he goes to church to show off his clothes and he misses a Sunday if the clothes are not up to the mark for the purpose :

“I thought, father, I had gone thither (Church) for nothing but to show my fine

¹² *Review*, February 19, 1704, p. 4.

¹³ *Review*, May 27, 1704.

¹⁴ *The Family Instructor*, Preface, p. IX, Oxford, 1841, vol. XV.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XVI, p. 269.

clothes''¹⁶. Here we find the two principles of pleasure and instruction united in a happy fusion.

In *The Family Instructor* two children convert their fathers¹⁷ although in the second of the two examples, the wife's wicked remark was an additional impetus to conversion. The dialogue where this remark occurs is spirited and worth quoting. The mother of the religious child was far from affectionate towards him and the father took her to task for this :

“Father : I said you were wicked enough to convert an atheist.

Mo. : Why, I han't converted you yet,

Father : I don't know whether you have or no : to be sure you act by the poor child as I could not by a stranger for all the world ; you make me tremble to hear you”¹⁸.

There is a similar scene in the same work in which an irreligious sister and a brother, Sir Richard, who is a pagan in his pleasures and associations, exchange heated remarks, one of which is so sharp that it quite pierces the heart of the young baronet and hastens his conversion. The sister tells him :

“Don't pray for me, *The prayers of the wicked are an abomination*, you know”¹⁹.

Sir Richard started at that scripture and paused here a little as if he had been struck with a bullet. There are other conversions too in *The Family Instructor*. Tom, in another episode, who was an

¹⁶ *The Family Instructor*, vol. XV, p. 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. XV, p. 33; vol. XVI, p. 312.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. XVI, p. 311.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XVI, p. 112.



apprentice to a shop-keeper converts Will, an apprentice to a clothier, living in the same locality, by the force of his example²⁰. The one requisite condition for such conversions is sincerity. The brother-in-law of Sir Richard told him :

"you have something so sincere in you, that I am satisfied it will some time or other kindle a fire in your soul that will flame up to heaven, and burn up all the harvest the devil hopes for in you; sincerity is a foundation for all that is religious to build upon"²¹.

Most of De Foe's principal characters repent of their wicked lives and undergo a conversion. Moll Flanders is converted at Newgate while she lay under a sentence of death :

"It was now, that for the first Time, I felt any real Signs of Repentance; I now began to look back upon my past Life with abhorrence, and having a kind of View into the other Side of Time, the Things of Life, as I believe they do with every Body at such a Time, began to look with a different Aspect, and quite another Shape, than they did before . . ."²².

The process started at Newgate continued till the end without any relapse to the wicked life she had led. Singleton repents at Quaker William's remark :

"it is because Men live as if they were never to dye, that so many dye before they know how to live"²³.

²² The Family Instructor, vol. XV, pp. 183f.

²¹ Ibid., vol. XVI, p. 84.

²² Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 113.

²³ Captain Singleton, p. 312.

At the height of his prosperity he was smitten with a deep distress that preceded his repentance :

"I had from this Time no Joy of the Wealth I had got ; I look'd upon it all as [a] stolen, and so indeed the greatest part of it was....I could never repent, for that Repentance could not be sincere without Restitution, and therefore I must of Necessity be damned, there was no room for me to escape . . . and nothing lay upon my Mind for Several Days, but to shoot my self into the Head with my Pistol"²⁴.

William later helped him to recover from his despondency.

"*William*, after he had done jesting with me, entered upon a very long and serious Discourse with me about the Nature of my Circumstances, and about Repentance, that it ought to be attended indeed with a deep Abhorrence of the Crime that I had to charge my self with, but that to despair of God's Mercy was no Part of Repentance, but putting my self into the Condition of the Devil"²⁵.

Singleton found comfort from what his friend told him and his mind knew peace and quiet after he had experienced true repentance. He did not want to throw away his money as "filthy lucre" as he had proposed to do.

"As to the Wealth I had, I look'd upon it as nothing ; I resolved to set it a part to any such Opportunity of doing Justice, that God should put into my Hand"²⁶.

Colonel Jack's repentance was spread over a long number of years. But his conversion took place

²⁴ Captain Singleton, p. 323.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 326.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 327.



at the end. Towards the conclusion of his story he adds these words :

"But here I had . . . Leisure to reflect, and to repent, and to call to Mind Things past, and with a just Detestation learn, as *Job* says, to abhor myself in *Dust and Ashes*"²⁷.

Examples may be multiplied to show De Foe's preoccupation with the problem of sin and repentance. But those already considered sufficiently demonstrate his interest in the subject and we may now ask, if there is also an account of conversion underlying the story of Robinson Crusoe's adventures or if the citations from Scripture and the religious reflections made there are merely evoked by the occasion or the mood of the "hero".

The story of Crusoe, like all good stories, is not merely a series of adventures, loosely strung together on the common thread of the "hero's" personality. As we shall presently see, the didactic element in it is a vital part of the adventures. In fact Crusoe could hardly fight down his despondency without his reliance on God, without the faith that overcomes mountains. The keynote of the book is struck in the words of the "hero's" father at the end of his exhortation that he should not run away to the sea :

"if I did take this foolish Step, God would not bless me, and I would have Leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his Counsel when there might be none to assist in my Recovery"²⁸.

The opposition to this advice constitutes his Original Sin—an act of disobedience²⁹. Crusoe resolved at first to abide by his father's wishes in

²⁷ Colonel Jack, vol. II, p. 153.

²⁸ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 4.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 225.



respect of his career but impulse in the shape of a rambling spirit got the better of him and he took boat from Hull for London. There was a storm which by the sailors' standard was of no account but it struck terror into his heart and he felt "how justly I was overtaken by the Judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my Father's House, and abandoning my Duty"³⁰. The sense of guilt fastened on him but its hold was still weak and a night of drinking drove all the fumes of terror out of his mind, and the incipient repentance vanished without leaving a trace behind. The next storm which was far more violent sunk the ship though no lives were lost. Safe on shore after this fearful experience, he could now easily return home like the Prodigal Son and the fatted calf would have been killed to welcome him. Although Reason and Judgement repeatedly urged this step, "a secret overruling Decree" hurried him to be the instrument of his own destruction³¹. The Ship's Captain warned him after the loss of the Ship that "*where-ever you go, you will meet with nothing but Disasters and Disappointments till your Father's Words are fulfilled upon you*"³².

The background is now fully set and the "Surprising adventures" follow with some degree of inevitability. After a short interval of success in Brazil, he goes as supercargo of a ship for organizing a trade in negro slaves. This undertaking arose out of the request of "some Merchants and Planters of my Acquaintance"³³, he obeying "blindly the Dictates of my Fancy rather than my Reason"³⁴. He did not at this early date think of God but believed in the sufficiency of reason for

³⁰ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 7.

³¹ Ibid., p. 14.

³² Ibid., p. 15.

³³ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 45; "Fancy" here seems to mean the same thing as "Impulse."



ordering his life, and when he was cast on the island after the disastrous voyage by which all his companions were killed, he tried to live according to the dictates of reason. Impulse from this time ceased to lead him. Many things he lacked in the island but he was not going to sigh for them and remain idle. "It was in vain to sit still and wish for what was not to be had"³⁵, and so he worked at his new tasks with untiring energy. This lonely existence was depressing in the highest degree and he told himself, "it could hardly be rational to be thankful for such a Life"³⁶, but this even by his logic was not the whole view of the situation :

"Reason as it were expostulated with me t'other Way, thus. . . . Is it better to be here or there, and then I pointed to the Sea? All Evils are to be consider'd with the Good that is in them, and with what worse attends them"³⁷.

In all things Crusoe was practical and he approached every problem with an open mind. He now proceeded to draw up a chart where he set down the evil against the good in his new environment. All that is said in the chart refers to material states and conditions³⁸ and there is as yet no indication³⁹ that he accepts his solitude as a divinely ordained means of winning grace through repentance. He concludes from this comparative chart that even in the worst of situations the good preponderates over the evil. There was a momentary conversion for him when he saw "ten or twelve Ears of barley" come out. He confesses he had "very few Notions of Religion in my Head"⁴⁰ but the barley startled him, "and I began to suggest, that God had miraculously caus'd this Grain to

³⁵ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 55.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

grow without any Help of Seeds sown”⁴⁰. But the religious feeling was premature. He could deny the miracle a little later when he saw the natural cause. His religious thankfulness to God’s Providence began also to abate. He was still without faith but his straight, firm honest nature was ready for the reception of the good seed. A terrible earthquake which now took place drew from him what looked like a prayer “*Lord ha’ Mercy upon me*”⁴¹ but was in fact a conventional expression—which left no mark on him. Although he did not pray, he had a healthy mind; in this island where he had to have all his wits about him, he “learn’d not to despair of any Thing”⁴². But he soon discovered the insufficiency of even this attitude when he saw what he was up against. Frightened to death by illness, he prayed to God crying, “*Lord look upon me, Lord pity me, Lord have Mercy upon me*”⁴³ and continued in this strain for two or three hours till he fell into a sleep from which he was awakened by a terrible dream. He saw a man descend from a black cloud, a flaming figure filling the atmosphere with radiance and shaking the Earth by the tread of his steps. He carried a spear in his hand, moving towards him as if to slay him and words to this effect fell from his lips, overwhelming him with terror—.

“*Seeing all these Things have not brought thee to Repentance, now thou shalt die*”⁴⁴.

It is as if Jehovah called to him with the voice of thunder before the God of Mercy came to him to offer him the succour of which he was in sore need.

⁴⁰ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 89.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 99.

⁴² Ibid., p. 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 100.



The dream was symptomatic of a change that was coming over the solitary hero who, after this, could no longer trust to reason to guide and comfort him.

The vision produced by a fevered imagination, in part, also by a growing sense of the inadequacy of a purely rationalistic attitude, accelerated his pace along the path of conversion. He deplored that he had no divine knowledge. What he had learned from his father "was then worn out by an uninterrupted Series, for 8 Years, of Seafaring Wickedness, and a constant Conversation with nothing but such as were like my self, wicked and prophane to the last Degree"⁴⁵. Here we have the evidence of the sense of sin without which conversion cannot take place. He was without the "least Sense either of the Fear of God in Danger, or of Thankfulness to God in Deliverances"⁴⁶. He himself explains his way of life :

"I was meerly thoughtless of a God, or a Providence; acted like a meer Brute from the Principles of Nature, and by the Dictates of common Sense only, and indeed hardly that"⁴⁷.

This was his unregenerate condition. Looking back on his past life, he could now see how often he had behaved without true thankfulness because he was not assisted by the Grace of God. Such an occasion there was when he was cast ashore and all his companions drowned; he analyses the feeling he had at the time :

"it ended", he remarks, "where it begun, in a meer common Flight of Joy, or as I may say, *being glad I was alive*, without the least Re-

⁴⁵ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 101.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.



flection upon the distinguishing Goodness of the Hand, which had preserv'd me”⁴⁸.

In his illness he had leisure to think and “Conscience that had slept so long, began to awake, and I began to reproach my self with my past Life”⁴⁹. The sense of sin, of having transgressed against the Will of God began to oppress him with the reproaches of conscience and Crusoe spoke some words “like praying to God, tho' I cannot say they were either a Prayer attended with Desires or with Hopes”⁵⁰. What he said proceeded from fear and distress, from the horror of dying as he was in his unregenerate state. The first prayer he now raised in the shape of a cry from the depths of his soul :

“*Lord be my Help, for I am in great Distress*”⁵¹.

His mind occupied itself with the great cause—the simplest procedure for anybody to follow—and he asked himself who made the Earth and the Sea and all the living creatures, human and other? The answer as he could make himself, is God;

“if God has made all these Things, He guides and governs them all, and all Things that concern them”⁵².

Surely then, he goes on to argue, God who knows everything and everything happens by his appointment, knows of him too and in a mood of deep grievance he complains,

“*Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus us'd?*”⁵³

But in a moment his conscience shows the folly of

⁴⁸ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 102.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 104.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 105-106.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 106.



the charges, and tells him that he has had more than his deserving :

"Wretch ! dost thou ask what thou hast done!"

*". . . Why is it that thou wert not long ago destroy'd? Why wert thou not drown'd in Yarmouth Roads?"*⁵⁴

His complainings were thus hushed, and guided by Heaven as it were, he took out one of the Bibles from the chest where they had so long lain uncared for and the first words that met his eyes as he opened the volume were, "*Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me*"⁵⁵. The appositeness of the passage to his own case struck him and he knelt down to pray to God that the promise of deliverance might be redeemed. He drank a glass of rum with tobacco steeped in it to keep off his sickness and slept for the next two days. The sleep was not merely induced by the drink. He was now reborn in spirit.

*"when I awak'd I found my self exceedingly refresh'd, and my Spirits lively and chearful"*⁵⁶.

The gloom and despondency was gone. He was a changed man. As his mind now ran on the thought of deliverance, promised by the scriptural passage, it occurred to him that he had failed to realize that deliverance had already come to him.

*"Have I not been deliver'd, and wonderfully too, from Sickness? . . . God had deliver'd me, but I had not glorify'd him"*⁵⁷.

He knelt down and gave God thanks aloud for recovery from his sickness. He decided to read the New Testament regularly.

⁵⁴ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 106.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 108. ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 109. ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

"I . . . impos'd upon my self to read a while every Morning and every Night, not tying my self to the Number of Chapters, but as long as my Thoughts shou'd engage me"⁵⁸.

He prayed to God to give him repentance when he lighted on these words,

*"He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and to give Remission"*⁵⁹.

And immediately after,

*"with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry'd out aloud, Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance"*⁶⁰.

It is wrong to call it his first prayer. For that honour belongs to an earlier passage already referred to⁶¹. But in his new spiritual life it is the first, and its nature, on which comments are made, is significant.

*"This was the first time That I could say, in the true Sense of the Words, that I pray'd in all my Life; for now I pray'd with a Sense of my Condition, and with a true Scripture View of Hope founded on the Encouragement of the Word of God; and from this Time, I may say, I began to have Hope that God would hear me"*⁶².

The hope of Delivery raised in him by the scriptural passage now came to mean not delivery from captivity but "from the Load of Guilt that bore down all my Comfort" and he adds the remark

⁵⁸ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 110.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 104.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 110-111.



that all who come to a true sense of things "will find Deliverance from Sin a much greater Blessing than Deliverance from Affliction"⁶³. That his conversion was now far advanced would appear from a passage like the following :

"My Condition began now to be, tho' not less miserable as to my Way of living, yet much easier to my Mind; and my Thoughts being directed, by a constant reading the Scripture, and praying to God, to things of a higher Nature"⁶⁴.

Conversion thus means a change of values, leading to the abandonment of inferior things for the sake of the higher. The first anniversary of his arrival at the island he observed with fast and prayers,

"confessing my Sins to God, acknowledging his Righteous Judgments upon me, and praying to him to have Mercy on me, through Jesus Christ"⁶⁵,

and the Sabbath day which he had so long neglected he now proposed observing. The next stage in his spiritual progress lay in an acquiescence in the Dispositions of Providence "which I began now to own, and to believe, order'd every Thing for the best"⁶⁶. Another anniversary comes round and he gives his humble and hearty thanks for the communications of Divine Grace to his Soul and he is able to realize "how much more happy this Life I now led was . . . than the wicked, cursed, abominable Life I led all the past Part of my Days"⁶⁷. But his fits of depression were not all gone. For it would seem to him that he "was a Prisoner, lock'd up with Eternal Bars and Bolts

⁶³ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 111.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 129.

of the Ocean, in an uninhabited Wilderness, without Redemption”⁶⁸. This feeling would suddenly overpower him, making “me wring my Hands, and weep like a Child”⁶⁹. Against this despondency he had to fortify himself by religious consolation and as he opened the Bible one morning, these words met his eyes : “*I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee*”⁷⁰, and he was at once buoyed up with hope as he thought the message of hope was specially meant for him. In his view the whole world without God was not worth anything and God would suffice even if the world failed. It occurred to him that it would be insincere to pretend to thank God for his condition of captivity although he tried to be contented with it since it was clear that he would make the most heart-felt prayer to be delivered from it. But the thanks he now offered were sincere and he offered them for “opening my Eyes, by whatever afflicting Providences, to see the former Condition of my Life, and to mourn for my Wickedness, and repent”⁷¹. He read the Bible for some time thrice a day, and if any good fortune came his way, he did not forget in the first instance to give thanks to God for it⁷². On the fourth anniversary of his captivity Crusoe observes :

“by a constant Study, and serious Application of the Word of God, and by the Assistance of

⁶⁸ Robinson Crusoe, Vol. I, p. 130. This sense of hopeless captivity did not evidently come after he had achieved a sense of harmony by his faith in God. He seemed here to be recalling an earlier experience as the following words by which the subject is introduced would suggest ; “*Before, as I walk'd about . . . the Anguish of my Soul at my Condition, would break out upon me on a sudden . . .*” (vol. I, p. 130).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 131.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.



his Grace, I gain'd a different Knowledge from what I had before. . I entertain'd different Notions of Things'’⁷³.

For him the world seemed remote and unreal and he had nothing more to do with it.

“I had neither the *Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*’’⁷⁴.

While the World receded farther from his view, he sought to draw closer to his Maker, and with the passage of time, he ceased to repine for what he had not and his content with what he had increased. To quote his words :

“I learn'd to look more upon the bright Side . . . and to consider what I enjoy'd rather than what I wanted ; and this gave me sometimes such secret Comforts, that I cannot express them’’⁷⁵;

and his content was strengthened by the reflection, how much better off he was compared with what he could expect to be. For himself he felt God had dealt bountifully with him ; had not only punished him less than his iniquity had deserv'd, but had so plentifully provided for him’’⁷⁶. This gave him hopes that his repentance was accepted and that God had yet Mercy in store for him.

Now we come practically to the final stage of his spiritual history—his complete conversion. After recounting the signal favours bestowed on him by divine providence, he goes on to state :

“I work'd my Mind up, not only to Resignation to the Will of God in the present Disposition of my Circumstances ; but even to a sincere Thankfulness for my Condition. . . . I had

⁷³ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 148. ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 148.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 150. ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 152.



been fed even by Miracle, even as great as that of feeding *Elijah* by Ravens”⁷⁷.

He made his sense of God's goodness to him his daily consolation and he “liv'd mighty comfortably, my Mind being entirely composed by resigning to the Will of God, and throwing my self wholly upon the Disposal of his Providence”⁷⁸. With unshakeable faith in God he thought of himself as “the Clay in the Hand of the Potter”⁷⁹ and he appealed to God in moments of uncertainty as to his conduct to guide his steps. He went out to witness the cannibal orgies without deciding upon his course of action, whether to let them go on or to open fire on them and prevent them from their inhuman rites. But he was resolved to “act then as God should direct”⁸⁰.

In some ways Crusoe's conversion is from freedom of Will to a Calvinistic determinism while that of the Ancient Mariner of Coleridge is from Necessitarianism to freedom of Will.

III.

De Foe on two occasions benefited by supernatural warnings—once early in his career when he had offer of a lucrative appointment at Cadiz which he did not accept on account of “a secret Aversion”⁸¹; again at a later date when he wrote to Chief Justice Parker an affecting letter in response to “a voice” calling upon him to do so, which saved him from unjust prosecution and a harsh judicial

⁷⁷ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, pp. 152-153; see Infra Chapter IX.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

⁸⁰ Ibid., vol. II, p. 20.

⁸¹ An Appeal to Honour and Justice, p. 194.



sentence⁸². His faith in the supernatural is thus unquestionably genuine. When he writes about Crusoe's conversion, he has a definite pattern in his mind and he is there neither dull nor repetitive. But his belief in hints, notices, dreams, etc. belongs to a different category⁸³. He repeatedly turns propagandist to tell the reader about their efficacy as guides and helps. That dreams sometimes foreshadow actual experiences may be true but neither he nor anybody else has been able to give any satisfactory explanation for this. And the premonition of evil is also a known phenomenon, although equally inexplicable. But De Foe in writing about the supernatural has all the zest of a propagandist :

"How when we are in' (a *Quandary*, as we call it) a Doubt or Hesitation, whether to go this Way, or that Way, a secret Hint shall direct us this Way, when we intended to go that Way; nay, when Sense, our own Inclination, and perhaps Business has call'd to go the other Way, yet a strange Impression upon the Mind, from we know not what Springs, and by we know not what Power, shall overrule us to go this Way; and it shall afterwards appear, that had we gone that Way which we should have gone, and even to our Imagination ought to have gone, we should have been ruin'd and lost"⁸⁴.

Such didacticism does not evidently help the narrative, and the reader may be forgiven if he is

⁸² A Vision of the Angelic World, Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe, G. A. Aitken, vol. III, p. 281.

⁸³ CP "But the more particular discoveries of this Converse of Spirits, and which to me are undeniable, are such as follows: Dreams, Voices, Noises, Impulses, Hints, Apprehensions" Ibid., p. 249.

⁸⁴ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, pp. 202-203.



impatient with the reflection even when he is ready to appreciate the supernatural incident itself which provides the immediate occasion for it. The decline from the level of art is shown by the tortured language in which De Foe sets forth what is usually held to-day as superstition rather than rational belief. He does not, however, lack enthusiasm to write on the subject on which he once more delivers his views :

"That such Hints and Notices are given us, I believe few that have made any Observations of things, can deny"^{ss}.

Crusoe goes on to say that he was saved from the danger to his life and liberty by attending to the "doubts that hung about me" when he saw a ship near his island manned by English sailors. In the *Farther Adventures* De Foe is once more back on his favourite theme :

"I am satisfied our Spirits embodied have a Converse with, and receive Intelligence from the Spirits unembodied and inhabiting the invisible World, and this friendly Notice is given for our Advantage, if we know how to make Use of it"^{ss}.

We may consider a few examples of dreams as pre-figurations of actual events, provided by De Foe in his novels, and try to ascertain if they in any way contribute or not to the development of his artistic purpose.

Robinson Crusoe has the dream of a savage running for shelter to his grove, before his fortification, outstripping his pursuers and finally

^{ss} Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 41.

^{ss} Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 166 (*Farther Adventures*).



begging his protection on his knees⁸⁷. This exactly happens some time later when he rescues Friday from the clutches of his savage enemies. As we shall see in Chapter IX, the presence of the supernatural emphasizes the symbolism in "Robinson Crusoe". In *The Farther Adventures*, Crusoe had a vision of the villainy perpetrated by the "reprobate sailors" during his absence from the island which substantially agreed with the actual facts⁸⁸. Quaker William in *Singleton* dreams of having discovered a gold mine⁸⁹ which proved true enough symbolically though in reality no mine was discovered. Colonel Jack dreamed of constables knocking at his door at the moment they took away his comrade for stealing and shop-lifting⁹⁰. The use of the supernatural in these examples cannot easily be defended. In *The Religious Instructor* most of the interest in the story of the opposition of the brother and sister to their father's religious government is lost by a dream which foreshadows nearly all the subsequent developments that take place⁹¹.

Before we conclude the section, a few more examples of the supernatural, apart from dreams, may be briefly noticed so as to form a clearer notion of De Foe's practice. Moll Flanders crying for her highwayman husband, on discovery of his flight, makes him return to her. From a distance of several miles he hears her distinctly calling him back⁹² and for a while he rejoins her to tell her about his strange experience. But no plans are changed, no decision reversed although they live

⁸⁷ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 230.

⁸⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 113.

⁸⁹ Captain Singleton, p. 216.

⁹⁰ Colonel Jack, vol. I, pp. 87-88.

⁹¹ The Religious Instructor, vol. XV, pp. 304f, 375.

⁹² Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 164.



together for a month more before they part again⁹³. The supernatural is here invoked to serve no purpose that we can see. De Foe acts merely as a philosophical propagandist trying to prove that for the communication of souls, space and time are no barriers. The same objection can be raised in the case of the storm that came when Roxana wished for it, diverting her ship from Holland to England⁹⁴. The wish acquires the potency of a prayer that can work miracles. But these miracles are valid when they are invoked with a proper sense of their importance. De Foe seems to invoke them to prove that they can and do take place. But this would hardly be a justification for the use of the supernatural.

There is an example of "second sight" in *The Fortunate Mistress* which can, however, be justified on artistic grounds. As Roxana's lover, the Jeweller, goes out one day, expecting to return late in the night, Roxana has a momentary glimpse of his person covered with blood foreshadowing his murder which took place shortly after :

"I stared at him as if I was frighted, for I thought all his Face looked like a Death's-Head; and then immediately I thought I perceiv'd his Head all Bloody, and then his Cloaths look'd Bloody, too; and immediately it all went off, and he look'd as he really did"⁹⁵.

This is the closest approximation that De Foe ever makes to the Shakespearean use of the supernatural.

⁹³ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 170.

⁹⁴ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 141.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 58.



Thus the supernatural in the hands of De Foe is not always effective from the point of view of his art. But in *A Journal of the Plague Year* the supernatural, as already seen (Chapter I), justifies itself as an important element in the atmosphere. It is legitimate also in *Robinson Crusoe* as we shall point out in Chapter IX.



CHAPTER VIII

CHARACTERS

“ . . . how admirable a Light it would afford, and how many useful Discoveries would be made for the inquiring World, could the Heart of Man be formed up into the Similitude of a Glass Beehive ; that all the secret Motions, Operations, and Conclusions formed there, by the Understanding and Will might be looked into ; the Passions, the Affections, the Designs, the Resolutions, the Measures taken, and to be taken, be seen and known ! What *Terra Incog.* would here be laid open ! . . . ”

Applebee's Journal, August 31, 1723
(Lee, vol. III, pp. 177-178)

We shall consider in this chapter De Foe's interest in men and women as a writer of fiction and of character sketches. (He has given us a wide variety of characters either as short sketches or in the form of autobiographical tales where they are seen more clearly by means of their acts and their conduct generally.) But De Foe never stressed the mind behind the act although there is just enough of it to make his portraits realistic. (He wrote a fairly large number of “characters” more or less in the seventeenth century tradition. They are scattered through his journalistic work, in his pamphlets, his *Religious Instructor*, *Complete English Tradesman* and also in his novels. His purpose is mainly didactic and critical and they bear witness to the variety of his interests, a subject already dealt with in previous chapters. Religion, politics, trade, learning and the various aspects of conjugal life engaged his pen as a writer of “Characters”. There are a few things, besides these, which do not come under any of the above



categories and his love of peculiarity of any kind probably drew him to them. They are, however, connected with contemporary society in which his interest was all embracing.

There seems to have been a technical reason for the inclusion of "characters" in his fiction. De Foe lays stress upon the "hero" or "heroine" and leaves most of the other persons unnamed. In the *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *A New Voyage Round the World* even the "heroes" are unnamed. But De Foe accorded to them the largest significance although on the whole they are only embodiments of certain distinct qualities and may be designated as the "brave soldier", the "devout person", and the "alert English traveller" and are by no means individuals. The many unnamed figures who flit in and out of the stories are usually seen in the relation they bear to the "hero" or "heroine". They are not allowed to become rivals of the principal character in the attention of the reader. The design to avoid calling people by their names has given prominence to qualities etc., which they represent. This makes it possible to classify them as "characters" such as Hall, Overbury, Earle, Bretton and others wrote. De Foe seems also to have been indebted to Ben Jonson¹ as descriptive names like the following would suggest : Leonard Love — Wit (*Mist's Journal*, May 7, 1720, Lee, vol. II, p. 229) Sir Courtly Nice (*The Protestant Monastery* in *Colonel Jacque*, vol. III. Edited by Aitken, p. 203), Formal—Stiff (*Applebee's Journal*, Aug. 14, 1725; Lee, vol. III, p. 415), Tradewell, (*Complete English Tradesman*, vol. XVII, Scott, p. 32), etc.

¹ This convention was general in the 17th and 18th century comedy: So the debt may have been indirect.

We may start by examining some of his characters, grouping them under such heads as Religion, Politics, Trade, Learning, and Conjugal life for the sake of convenience. There will be a few others for which no such classification is given and they may be represented under the common head "Miscellaneous".

Religion : A Pharisee.

De Foe hated a Pharisee above everybody. His narrow-minded self-righteous attitude was painfully distant from his own imaginative nature and the large sympathies that he possessed. His dislike was thus temperamental. This is how he describes a Pharisee; he writes with the Biblical model in front of him, and does little more than modernise it.

"Here is my landlord a drunkard, one of my tenants is a thief, such a poor man is a swearer, such a rich man a blasphemer, such a tradesman is a cheat, such a justice of the peace is an atheist, such a rakish fellow is turned highwayman, such a beau is debauched; but I—I that am clothed in negatives, and walk in the light of my own vanity—I live a sober, regular, retir'd life, I am an honest man; I defraud nobody; no man ever heard me swear, or an ill word come out of my mouth; I never talk irreligiously or profanely, and I am never missed out of my seat at church. God, I thank thee! I am not debauched, I am no highwayman, no murderer, etc."

(*Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*, ch. IV, Aitken's Edition, vol. III, p. 159)



An earlier attempt to describe a Pharisee in *The Religious Instructor* did not come off. For the man became a penitent and at the earliest opportunity exhibited a sense of sin. In the "Introduction" to the work, De Foe, however, quite unfairly represents him as a Pharisee :

"The father represented here, appears knowing enough, but seems to be one of those professing Christians who, acknowledging God in their mouths, yet take no effectual care to honour him with their practice; that live in a round of religion, as a thing of course; have not the power of godliness, nor much of the form, a kind of negative Christian, 'a God, I thank thee' pharisee, sound in knowledge but negligent in conversation; orthodox in opinion, but heterodox in practice".

(*The Religious Instructor*, Scott, vol. XV,
Introduction, p. 3).

The following brief conversation between the so-called Pharisaical father and his six year-old son would reveal a character quite opposed to that suggested above :

Fa : Yes, child, he made you to serve him.
Child : And do you serve him, father
(Here the father weeps, and speaking to
him with a sigh says,
Lord : how this child is made to sting
my soul to the quick !")
(Ibid., vol. XV, p. 13).

De Foe intended to draw a Pharisee but his aversion from the type led him to drop the design. He could have patience with it in a short sketch but not in a long story such as the one in which the "Father" and the "Child" appear. There is

a companion picture to the Pharisee in his account of "the negative good man"

"He is no drunkard, but he is intoxicated with the pride of his own worth; he is a good neighbour, a common arbitrator and peace-maker in other families, but a cursed tyrant in his own; he appears in a public place of worship for a show, but never enters his closet and shuts the door about him, to pray to Him that sees in secret; he is covered with the vainglorious and ostentatious part of charity, but does all his alms before men, to be seen of them; he is mighty eager in the duties of the second table, but regardless of the first; appearingly religious to be seen and taken notice of by men; but between God and his own soul no intercourse, no communication . . . ; in a word, he is a man perfect in the circumstances of religion, and perfectly a stranger to the essential part of religion".

(*Serious Reflections*, p. 163)

A third offender is a man who tries to pay his homage to God and man in the same breath. The dramatic element in the following and other sketches greatly abridges the distance between "a character" and true characterisation :

"I happened to be at an eminent place of God's most devout worship the other day, with a gentleman of my acquaintance, who, I observed, minded very little the business he ought to come about; first I saw him always busy staring about him, and bowing this way and that way; nay, he made two or three bows and scrapes when he was repeating the responses to the Ten Commandments, and, I assure you, he made it correspond strangely,



so that the harmony was not so broken in upon as you would expect it should; thus *Lord*—and a bow to a fine Lady, just come up to her seat—*have mercy upon us*; three bows to a throng of ladies that came into the next pew altogether—and incline—then stopped to make a great scrape to my lord—*our hearts*—just then the hearts of all the church were gone off from the subject, for the response was over, so he huddled up the rest in whisper, for God a'mighty could hear him well enough, he said, nay, as well as if he had spoken as loud as his neighbours did”.

(*The Political History of the Devil*, Scott, vol. X, p. 219).

De Foe's Political “Characters” include “A zealous whig” (*Rogues on Both Sides*, London, 1711, p. 5), “An Old Whig” (Ibid., p. 9), “A Modern Whig” (Ibid., 10), “An Old Tory” (Ibid., p. 20), “A Motley” (Ibid., p. 26); “A Modern Tory” (Ibid., p. 27), “Intriguers”, “A Sneaker”, “Discontent” (*The Secret History of October Club*, London, 1711, p. 33), “High Flyers” (*Rogues on Both Sides*, p. 24). Two or three out of this group may be examined to form an idea about his treatment. Some have already been noticed in previous chapters and it will not be necessary, therefore, to refer to them again :

Intriguers.

“We have a sort of Men who go about whispering their Threats, and casting out Insolence by Innuendo; when they speak of the Ministers of State thus, *Well*, they had best have a Care, they do not know where this may end! Sure! they will never Venture to Dissolve the Parliament of Ireland! *Well*, if they do, they may pull an Old

House upon their Heads! Well, certainly they will never venture to settle a Commerce with France! They do not know what a stir it may make among the People! So formerly, They will never Dare to make a Peace without the confederates! if they do, let them look to it, and the like!"

(*A Letter to the Whigs*, London, 1714, p. 26).

A Sneaker.

. . . . He was born with a tongue, but his eyesight took away the use of it; for he no sooner saw the golden apple of preferment, but he laid hold of it, and was silent.

. . . . He is a pretended stickler for the Queen's authority, just so long as he receives the Queen's Money; while to shew, how undeserving he is of her royal favour, he confederates himself for the downfall of the Queen's religion. He is an Englishman with a Scotch heart, an Irish pair of heels, and a Spanish countenance. His policy consists in a demure look, his courage in withdrawing himself when there is an occasion; his constancy is variation; and his honesty is what you think fit to call it, for I know not where to find it etc., etc.

(*The Character of a Sneaker*, London, 1705, Harleian Miscellany, vol. II.; London, 1809, pp. 354-356). This is the longest of the characters written by De Foe and in some ways it is different from most of the others by him.

High Flyers.

" they take all the Oaths and Abjurations you please, they scruple nothing, a Parliament cannot make an Oath they will not readily



swallow ; they swear and forswear, and back-swear at any time, and any way you please. Nor does this at all hinder their firm Adherence to their Cause ; to be a true *High Flyer*, is to be true to the Party they swear against, and swear to the Party they would destroy ; Oaths and Abjurations are Tricks of your own to deceive them, and they do but turn the Tables upon you, and make them Snares to deceive your selves ; they are not therefore to be trick'd out of their Cause at that Rate, they will save their true Friends, and at the same time swear to their Enemies, and if it be not good Gospel, 'tis good Cunning ; and as to the Perjury and future Rewards, which we say the Devil will pay them—Let the Devil and them alone to agree about that, they adjourn that to hereafter ; the present Business is to carry on their Cause and their Party, and in that they consult not with Religion, or trouble their Heads with Futurity".

(*Review*, September 4, 1708, p. 274 ; There is another account of a High Flyer in *Rogues on Both Sides*, London 1711, pp. 24-26 with which this one does not differ substantially).

De Foe's characters also deal with learning and the pretence to learning. This one will remind the reader of "Tom Folio" in the Spectator, and considering the date of its publication (1726), an influence of the earlier essay is not improbable.

"Sir Timothy Titlepage is an admirable gentleman ; his knowledge of the first leaf of everything, completely covers his ignorance of the inside of anything. His just character is so true a picture of the age, that you need go no further for a reason why nonsense bears such a price, and the booksellers' trade is so much improved ; seeing they buy most books that read least, and that, according to the famous Dr Salmon, the having a

good library makes a man a doctor. However, sir Timothy, no doubt, understood the names of authors, and had as good a local memory as to the editions of books, as most men that could not read Latin. Nor was he ever out in his judgment, that I have heard of, till an unlucky linen-draper asked him once concerning the learned author called Crocus upon Hinderlands², who the knight presently owned, but unluckily forgot that the impression was made in Germany, and that the books came over not in quires, but in rolls, from Bremen and Hamburg³.

A Pedant.

.....
He was, in the first place, of a sour, cynical, surly, retired Temper; this I suppose, though some of it came from mere Nature, yet had grown upon him by Time, being the consequence of poring upon his Book.

In the next Place, if he performed anything as a Scholar, it came from him by the violent Labour of his Head, violent mortifying Application, and with not only twice the Labour, but twice the Time that other Men ordinarily took for such Things.

At the same time he was a Critick in the Greek and Hebrew, he hardly could, or at least did not, spell his Mother Tongue, English.

His Stile was all rough Laconicks, thronged with Colons and Fullpoints; and he seldom made his Paragraphs above a line and a half.

² "Crocus and Hinderlands are two particular sorts of coarse Germany linen, which are imported by the Hamburg merchants, and are known to every draper". A System of Magic, Scott, vol. XII, f.n., p. 333.

³ A System of Magic, pp. 332-333.



He was in Orders, and some times read a Sermon or two; but preached away all his Hearers, not being able to suit his Discourse to his Auditory. He made his ordinary Sermons the same as if he had been to preach *ad Clerum*, or to the Heads of the University.

Writing a Letter to me once, upon a Disaster which had befallen one of his Scholars, he wrote that there was a sad Accidence fallen out in his School; and, when I shewed it him, and would have mentioned it as a mistake of his Pen, he began to be Warm, would needs justify the Orthography of it, and began to talk of the Etymology and Derivation of the Words.

He knew no more of the World abroad than if he had never seen a Map, or read the least Description of Things. He could give no more Account of Africa or America than if they had never been discovered; only, that he knew St. Cyprian and St. Augustine, but not whereabouts they lived, or whether Africa was divided from America by Water, or by Land.

He understood not a Word of French, Dutch, Spanish, or Italian. He had read the Roman Histories, and the Church Histories, and had the Names of all the great Cities and Kingdoms in the Grecian, Persian, and Assyrian Monarchies by heart; but knew nothing of what Part of the Globe they were to be found in.

He had Horace and Virgil in his Head, and was as good as an Index Verborum to Juvenal and Persius. As for the Bible, *give him his Due*, he was a walking Concordance, and had a local Memory for Chapter and Verse; but when he preached, he was all Exposition, without either Inference or Application.

Take him among his Books, everything that was ancient, crabbed, and critical, suited; every-



thing modern, smooth, eloquent, and polite, provoked him to Wrath. He had Learning enough to find fault, but not good humour enough to mend; he liked nothing, and nothing he performed could be liked. His mere learning must be buried with him, for 'tis like a great Crowd pressing out at a little Door, for Want of Room to come out all at once, it cannot come at all.

In a Word, he knows Letters, and perhaps could read half the Polyglot-Bible, but knows nothing of the World,—has neither read Men nor Things; and this, they say, is a Scholar."

(*Applebee's Journal*, November 6, 1725, Lee, vol. III, pp. 438-439); In *The Complete English Gentleman* there are a number of portraits; one about a Lord without education occurs on p. 158 (Bülbiring's Edition).

Trade and finance always received considerable attention from our author. Four examples are chosen to illustrate what he thought specially suitable for his character sketches in this field. We find many of his important ideas set forth within the narrow compass of these sketches.

Mr Tradewell

"There was a fine trade at that shop in Mr. Tradewell's time; he was a true shopkeeper; you never missed him from seven in the morning to twelve, and from two till nine at night; and he thrived accordingly; he left a good estate behind him".

Complete English Tradesman, vol. xvii, p. 32

A Thriving Tradesman.

".....he seems not only thoroughly settled with respect to his circumstances but that settle-



ment seems the best secured and established ; and though he is not incapable of a disaster, yet he is in the best manner fenced against it of any man whatever.

His life is perfectly easy, surrounded with delights ; every way his prospect is good ; if he is a man of sense he has the best philosophic retreats that any station of life offers him ; he is able to retire from hurry, to contemplate his own felicity, and to see it the least encumbered of any state of the middle part of life.

He is below the snares of the great, and above the contempt of those that are called low : his business is a road of life, with few or no uneven places in it ; no chequered work, no hills and dales in it, no woods, and wildernesses to lose his way and wander in : plenty surrounds him, and the increase flows in daily ; like a swelling tide, he has a flood without an overwhelming, deeps without drowning, heights without falling ; he is a safe man, nothing can hurt him but himself ; if he comes into any mischiefs, they are of his own choosing ; if he falls, it is his own doing, and he has nobody to blame but himself."

(*The Complete English Tradesman, Novels and Miscellaneous Works of De Foe*
Ed. by Scott, volume xviii, pp. 89-90)*

MISCELLANEOUS

A Rude Person

There's Friend Zachary, the Quaker, runs in Debt to all his Neighbours, for Good Manners. The Man had Respect shewn him by every body

* Cp. The "excellent Counsel" of Crusoe's father regarding the merits of the middle Station, vol. I, pp. 2-3.



in our Street; and when we met him walking along, or standing at his Door, we all pull'd off our Hats. Zachary in return, standing bolt upright, paid nothing, but went upon Tick unconscionably. The most that could be got of him was, now and then, a Nod of his Head or a "*How dost do?*" softly expressed, as if he was afraid you should hear him; all which, placed honestly to Account, would but amount to Six pence in the Pound; a Composition so low that 'tis not worth naming. Yet, when he is spoken to about it, he answers coldly, that he can make no other payment, and if his Creditors won't accept of it, they must take their course."

(*Applebee's Journal*, August 14, 1725, Lee,
vol. III, p. 414-415).

• *Formal Stiff* •

This account which follows the preceding one in *Applebee's Journal* is in the same tune;—although the characters are given names they do not lose thereby their essential feature, defined by Overbury as “a picture (reall or personall) quaintlie drawne in various collours, all of them heightned by one shadowing”⁵

There's Formal Stiff, Esq., Justice of Peace in our Division; he is worse than Friend Zach., for he runs in Debt with an Air of Insolence to every Body. His broad Hat cock'd up on three Sides, sits fast on his Head, and when he meets any of his Parishioners,—tho' of as good Figure as his Worship,—when they pull their Hats off, he pulls his Hat on;”

(Ibid., Lee, vol. III, p. 415).

⁵ W. J. Paylor, B.A., B.Litt.—The Overburian Characters (Oxford, Blackwell, 1936) p. 92.

*A Hypocrite*

On the other Hand, there's my Lord *Plausible*, a Man of Quality, and he is in the other Extreme. For tho' he runs behind hand extremely in *Sincerity*, and 'tis feared, will in a little while, be quite Bankrupt in that Way; yet he brings every Body into Debt to him for *Ceremony*.....

(*Ibid.*, Lee, vol. III, p. 415).

A Pagan

Sir Richard was a man as void of religion as could well be supposed of any man bred up in a Christian country ; he was a drunken, swearing, ranting gentleman, a man of pleasure, kept his hounds and horses, loved his sport and his bottle, and had his companions for the purpose ; drank hard, kept great company, and in a word, swam down the common stream of vice, as a man that never looked behind him. As to religion, he used to say he had as much as a gentleman of 2000*l.* a year had occasion for ; he knew very little of it, and minded it less ; nor was there least concern about such things to be seen in the family.

But other wise he was a man of clear head ; understood the world and himself perfectly well ; was.....of an excellent temper, easily reasoned into or out of anything ; very sincere and without any ill-meaning to his neighbours ; beneficent to his tenants, compassionate to all, and charitable, not from a principle of religion, but of mere good nature”.

(*The Family Instructor*, Scott,
vol. xvi, p. 120).

De Foe wrote about a Female Quixote long before Mrs. Charlotte Lennox published her



Female Quixote (1752). Here is a short excerpt from his account :

A Female Quixote

My Education has been somewhat rural, for I live in a Town about eight miles from London ; but then I am as well acquainted with Plays, Novels, and Romances, as if I had been born near Temple-Bar, and have a particular Veneration for all Knight-Errantry. I dearly love Intrigues, but then it must be with Men of Gallantry ; for I have a natural Aversion to all Tradesmen, from the Cellar to the Garret.....recommend me to some Knight-Errant of your Acquaintance. I don't care if his Head be as chimerical as mine, but let his Pocket be substantial ; let him address himself to me in the romantick Strains of the Knight-Errants of old, according to the right Rules of *Quixotism*, and he need not doubt a suitable Return.....

(*Mist's Journal*, March 19, 1720 ; Lee,
vol. II, pp. 212-213).

It is curious to notice that even the "Female Quixote" of De Foe does not lack some degree of prudence ; for she is ready to put up with everything except poverty. This prudence is a marked characteristic of all De Foe characters.

A Virtuous Man

He must be one, that searching into the Depths of Truth, dare speak her aloud in the most dangerous Terms ; that fears no Faces, courts no Favours, is subject to no Interest, bigotted to no Party ; that asks no protection, is afraid of no Laws, hunts after no Preferments, sollicits for no Place, and will be a Hypocrite for no Gain. . . ."

(*Review*, August 12, 1710, p. 234).

*A Perfect Woman*

I shall tell you, in short, that her Soul is purely masculine, her Judgement sound, her Wit most excellent, ready and acute, her Knowledge unconfined, and all her Arguments, upon whatever Subject, strong and truly rational. She delights herself with none of those little Vanities and Formalities, that commonly engage other Women; her Discourse is without the least Mixture of Scandal; not censorious, or apt to suspect, but generous and free. But what is beyond all, and proves her something more than Woman, is the Excellence of her retentive Faculty, a secret being as securely reposed in her, as in the most tenacious Man. . . . She's so perfectly Mistress of her Words and Actions, and so truly virtuous, that she rather deadens than creates a Passion, in any that has any other Engagements; which Conduct, would the rest of her Sex imitate, we might hope for an honester World. . . .

(*Mist's Journal*, May 7, 1720; Lee, vol. II,
p. 228).

On husbands and wives, De Foe's observations are fairly exhaustive. He visualised a great variety of complexities in their relations in *Use and Abuse of Marriage Bed*, *The Religious Instructor* and other works, besides writing a large number of characters on the subject; the following selection will show that he had thought about problems connected with the married state and that he had very definite views on many points. There is evidence also of greater psychological powers in some of these characters than in any so far noticed. In a number of the *Review* he wrote about various types of bad husbands, the worst of the series being, in his opinion, A Fool. We may proceed to give below these character sketches:

A Drunken Husband

There is the Drunken Husband, whose Picture it would take up a whole Volume to describe; his Drunken Passions, his Drunken Humours, his drunken Smell, his drunken Bed-fellowship, and above all, his drunken Love; O! an Amorous Drunkard, when he comes home, fully gorg'd and staggers into Bed—To a modest, a nice, and a Virtuous Wife, must needs have a great many Charms in it, such as my Pen cannot bear the stench of relating".

(*Review*, October 4, 1707, p. 403).

A Debauch'd Husband

There is the Debauch'd Husband, who having a sober, young, pleasant and beautiful Wife—Slights and abandons her to take up with an ugly, a taudry, nasty, and noysome Strumpet—And convinces the World, that Lust is blinder than Love—This sort of Wretch has but one Act of Kindnes, to his Wife, which distinguishes him from other Brutes of his kind, and that is, that coming home loaden with Vice and Rottenness, he gives his honest Wife an ill Disease that lifts her out of the World, putting her out of his Reach, and out of her Torment all together.

(*Review*, October 4, 1707, p. 403).

A Fighting Husband

There is the Fighting Husband, I confess this is a strange Creature, that when any thing has put him in a Passion abroad, comes and vents his Thunder and Lightning at Home; that having not a Heart to fight with a Man, *for generally speaking, such Fellows are always Cowards*, must come home and fight with his Wife; these are excellent



sort of People, and ought all to come to the same Preferment, one lately did in these Parts, who beating his Wife a little too much, the Poor Woman took it so ill, that she kill'd him for it—That is, she dy'd, and he was Hang'd for the Murther, as he deserv'd.

(*Review*, October 4, 1707, p. 404).

An Extravagant Husband

. . . this is the *ill Husband*, properly so call'd, or as the Word is generally receiv'd—This is a Blessed Fellow too, and his way is, that he spends his Money in Roaring, Gaming, and Drinking, when the poor woman sits quietly at Home, waking and sighing for his Company—if he is Poor, as 'tis a wonder he should be Rich, he seats himself and his Gang at the Taverns and Ale-Houses, while the unhappy Wife wants Bread at Home for his Children—if he is an Artist, he won't Work; if he has a Shop, he won't mind it; if Business it runs at Random; the Sot dreams away his time, Ruines himself, and starves his Family; the End of this Wretch, is generally to run away from her, into the Army or Navy, and so dies like a Rake, or perhaps takes up his Lodgings nearer home in a Gaol.

(*Review*, October 4, 1707, p. 404).

. It is interesting to note that the linen draper whom Moll Flanders marries practically rehearses the career of the "extravagant husband" as stated above. He wasted all the money he had and was finally taken into the "spunging house" out of which he, however, makes his escape*.

* Moll Flanders, Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. I, pp. 60-62.

*A Fool Husband*

The Drunkard, the Debauch'd, the Fighting, and the Extravagant; these may all have something Attendant, which in the Intervals of their Excesses may serve to alleviate and make a little amends to the poor Woman, and help her to carry thorough the Afflicting Part; but a FOOL has something *always about him*, that makes him intollerable; he is ever Contemptible and uninterrupted Ridiculous; it is like a handsome Woman with some Deformity about her, that makes all the rest be Rejected; if he is kind, it is so Apish, so below the Rate of Manhood, so Surfeiting, and so disagreeable, that like an ill Smell, it makes the Face wrinkle at it; if he be froward, he is so un-sufferably Insolent, that there is no bearing it; his Passions are all flashes, struck out of him like Fire from a Flint; if it be Anger, 'tis sullen and senceless; if Love, 'tis Course and Brutish; he is in Good; wavering; in Mischief, obstinate; in Society, empty; in Management, unthinking; in Manners, sordid; in Error, Incorrigible; and in everything Ridiculous.

(*Review*, October 4, 1707, p. 404).

Roxana's husband, the Brewer, was a Fool. After wasting her fortune and his own, he left her, saddled with five children, to struggle with poverty. And Roxana speaks her mind about a fool. This agrees with the character sketches quoted above, written nearly seventeen years earlier. Addressing "the young Ladies of this country" she goes on to say:

"If you have any Regard to your future Happiness; any View of living comfortably with a Husband; and Hope of preserving your Fortunes, or restoring them after any Disaster, Never,



Ladies, marry a Fool ; any Husband rather than a Fool ; . . . everything he does is so awkward, every-
thing he says is so empty, a Woman of any Sence
cannot but be surfeited and sick of him twenty
times a-Day : . . . No Fool, Ladies, at all, no kind
of Fool ; whether a mad Fool, or a sober Fool, a
wise Fool, or a silly Fool, take anything but a
Fool ; nay, be anything, be even an old Maid, the
worst of Nature's Curses rather than take up with
a Fool". She saw the Brewer many years later
in Paris when she was the mistress of the French
Prince, by an accident. Enquiries she made showed
that she had no reason to change her opinion of him
and once more she reflected on marrying a Fool :
"I was a Warning for all the Ladies of *Europe*,
against marrying of FOOLS ; A Man of Sence falls
in the World, and gets-up again, and a Woman
has some Chance for herself ; but with a Fool ! once
fall, and ever undone ; once in the Ditch, and die
in the Ditch ; once poor, and sure to starve".

In *The Serious Reflections* De Foe mentions
in a facetious manner the number and variety of
Fools he has known :

"I might here, indeed, find subject for a large
tract upon the infinite diversity of fools, and by
consequence the wondrous beauty of their conver-
sation. I have on this occasion reckoned up a list
of about seven and thirty several sorts of fools, be-
sides Solomon's fool, who I take to be the wicked
fool only ; these I have diversified by their tempers
and humours . . . in everyone of which they rob
themselves, and all that keep them company, of
the felicity of conversation, there being nothing in
them but emptiness, or a fullness of what is ridicul-

⁷ The Fortunate Mistress, Shakespeare Head Edition,
vol. I, pp. 4-5.

⁸ Ibid., vol. I., p. 110.



ous, and only qualified to be laughed at or found fault with.

I have likewise described some of their conversation, their vain repetitions, their catchwords, their laughings and gestures, and adapted them to make the world merry. I have thought of running it on into foreign characters, and describe French, Spanish, Portuguese fools, and fools of Russia, China, and the East Indies ;”

(*Serious Reflections*, Aitken, pp. 74-75).

It is curious that De Foe should so often return to the subject^o. There is in all his remarks an obvious irritation with fools, however he may try to conceal his feeling under a mask of facetiousness. His own rational temper is no doubt an explanation but one may perhaps also conclude that in his domestic life he was probably irritated by some fool of a relation. In public life, too, he must have seen people in positions of authority talk and act foolishly. In that respect his age was certainly not singular.

The following “Character” of a jealous husband, written in 1725, shows the manner of a novelist rather than that of the half way house of an earlier day when the novel was still to be born. De Foe had surely read Jonson’s *Volpone* but the jealous husband is his own. Quite appropriately it is the wife who describes him and her account resolves into a series of dramatic scenes :

A Jealous Husband.

“My Husband is as jealous of me as if I was the worst Woman alive. If a Gentleman does but

^o The proposal of a fool-house is however made in earnest and in an entirely different spirit. *Essay upon Projects*, Hazlitt, vol. III, p. 29.



look up towards the House, as he goes by, he takes it for granted I am at the Window, and have given him some Signal for an Assignation; then out he runs into the Street, and looks up too. If I am at the Door, or in the Street, and any Gentleman happens to pull off his Hat to me, he marks the Man, runs after him and dogs him to his House, if it be possible to know who he is, and to see if he can make anything out of it, tho' it be but in his own Fancy; and did he live in *Italy*, as he does in *England*, he would have hired Ruffians and Banditti before now, to have stabb'd forty or fifty honest Housekeepers for only looking at his Wife, when he did not think it proper."

(*Applebee's Journal*, March 6, 1725, Lee, vol. III, pp. 361-362) Similarly the description of a jealous wife comes from the husband:

A Jealous Wife.

She is "very jealous, mistrustful, and has a little too much of the Woman, that is, a certain Levity in her Behaviour, a profound Obsturacy, a nimble Tongue, a very weak Brain . . . she loves no Topick but Love, and Cupid is her only Deity; but to take her out of that, is to take her out of her proper Element. All rational Discourse is thrown away upon her. In short, she's a meer Conveniency, a perfect necessary Evil, and has no Charms but what are extrinsical; . . . She would confine me perpetually to her own Company, and is extravagantly passionate and cross, if I entertain myself with any other; and says, I ought to have no Passion, Taste, or Relish for any Thing but her own dear self".

(*Mist's Journal*, May 7, 1720; Lee, vol. II, p. 227).

The character of a shrewish wife as that of a quarrelsome one also come from their victims :

A Shrewish Wife.

"I have a hard-favoured, hard-hearted, Iron-Sided, hard-humoured Helpmate, who is never in Humour with any Body but herself ; and her dear self she loves so dearly, that she cannot spare one Dram of Love for anything else. She leads me a hellish Life ; continually Seasoning my Ears with Variety of Railings and spurious Names, such as Platter-Face, over-grown Rascal, Horse-Face, *East-India* Brood of the Children of *Anak*, tann'd Hide, scrap'd-Phiz, etc., which I am so far from being discompos'd at, that I only Laugh at her Weakness, and thank God it is no worse, since she keeps her Hands off me ; for should she once finger me, I should crumble her to Atoms.

(*Mist's Journal*, May 28, 1720 ;
Lee, vol. II, 238).

A Quarrelsome Wife.

"In a Word, Strife is her Element, and she cannot breathe out of it, or subsist without it ; 'tis her daily Business to argue, contend, be spiteful, insolent, and abusive. The calmest Words beget contention, Words cannot be so put together as to please her, or when stirr'd to appease her ; to slight and say nothing is not to be done. . . ."

(*Applebee's Journal*, April 17, 1725 ;
Lee, vol. III, 377).

De Foe's women often show a rebellious temper against their husbands. They refuse submission to their authority and claim to be treated as their equals. There are numerous examples of



this showing that in this as in many other things De Foe was far ahead of his time and held that women's legal subjection to men was wrong. In the plea for a women's academy in *An Essay upon Projects* to which reference has already been made, he makes it clear that he is not ready to concede that woman is man's intellectual inferior.¹⁰ The following opinion put into the mouth of a termagant wife reminds us of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*: "Women, in my Opinion, ought never to be put to Death for Murthering their Husbands, unless it be where the peaceable Disposition of the Man, and the violent and unquiet Temper of the Wife, be first duly attested; and that, not for one single Action, but from the whole Tenour and Course of their living together. For else, I cannot think a Woman provok'd even to Distraction and Madness, ought to be deem'd any more *Compos Mentis*; or to be punish'd for any Violence she may be unhappily guilty of afterwards, especially in the heighth of the Provocation".

(*Applebee's Journal*, January 23, 1725; Lee, vol. III, p. 357).

The portrait of a wife full of spiritual pride follows. Her character is represented by means of dialogue. Her answers are only given below. One noticeable feature in her replies is the implied revolt—a subject to which we shall return when considering the character of Roxana, and to a less extent, that of Moll Flanders. The following scene may well have been written by G. B. S. All that is said is provoked by the husband's insistence on introducing family worship.

¹⁰ CP the remark: It looks as if we "Denied women the advantages of education for fear they should vie with the men in their improvements".

An Essay upon Projects, Hazlitt, vol. III, p. 42.

Wife. You are mighty full of Scripture.

Wife. Your ignorance is as great as your pride; you understand not what you read, but pretend to quote words spoken to a whole Church, nay, perhaps to a whole district of churches, and respecting the general unity of the church, in opposition to the heathen, and apply it to the little debate between you and your wife. I am ashamed of you, I have no patience with such impertinence.

(*The Family Instructor*, Scott, vol. XVI
of the Works, pp. 64-65).

The dramatic representation of character by De Foe in a number of dialogues in *The Family Instructor* and *The Use and Abuse of Marriage Bed* is done very effectively. The following illustration taken from the latter work shows a Knight and his Lady, both of whom married without love for the sake of money and rank, arrived at a crisis in their lives when they could no longer maintain even the façade of decency by a quiet resignation to the fate they had chosen for themselves. Their character emerges in the dialogue, containing only short, sharp, stinging sentences which they hurl at each other unmercifully.

Knight. Love! love! nay, the d—l take your Ladyship, you know I never loved you in my life.

Lady. Nay, I was pretty even with Sir Thomas, for I hated you heartily from the first hour I saw you.

Knight. Equally yoked! madam, that's true, equally yoked!

(To that he added an oath or two).

Lady. Ay, ay! a yoke indeed, and two beasts to draw in it.



Knight. Good words, madam, why didn't you say whore and rogue?

Lady. And if I had, it had been but plain English.

Knight. And plain truth, you mean, I suppose.

Lady. Nay, what was Sir Thomas, to marry a woman that he could swear he never loved in his life?

Knight. And pray, what was my lady, to go to bed to a man she hated most heartily?

Lady. The more innocent of the two, for I was never married.

Knight. Not married! why, what have you been doing then all this while? What's the English of that, madam?

Lady. The English of what? I could make it speak English if I would; but good manners, rather than a regard to the person, stops my mouth.

Knight. Nay, let it come out, madam; there can be no loss of good language between you and I. I have lain with a woman I did not love, and you have lain with a man these four years, and were never married. What will my lady call herself next?

Lady. Not a whore for all that; So I have the better of Sir Thomas still.

Knight. What can it be then? No magic, I doubt, will bring your ladyship off.

* * * *

Knight. I saw nothing in you at first to make a man happy.



Lady. And I desired no happiness so much, when I went to church, as to have been delivered from you.

Knight. I was bewitched with the money indeed—, but never with the lady, I assure you.

Lady. And my mother was fond of the knight-hood indeed ; I am sure I was never fond of the knight.

* * * *

Knight. Well, I will find some way to put an end to it, I'll warrant you ; at worst, a pistol and half an ounce of lead will deliver me at once.

Lady. The sooner the better, Sir Thomas ; heaven keep you in the mind.

(*The Use and A buse of Marriage Bed*, Hazlitt, vol. III, pp. 48-49).

There is, in the above dialogue, a good deal of the sharp shooting of wit, employed to hurt each other by recalling all the circumstances of a marriage that has failed and the partakers to which did not put first things first when they went to church to solemnize the contract between them. They are a desperate couple with no hope of reconciliation before them and the way of escape out of the misery is by self-murder which the husband proposes, and the wife approves with apparent satisfaction. De Foe hits upon a situation and develops it with a true dramatic sense.

The characters noticed above date from 1705 and extend until practically the end of De Foe's literary career. They testify to his keen interest in human nature and to the great range of his



observations. He had models for this type of work in the seventeenth century writers but he gives the reader the impression mostly of transcribing an experience, of falling into dialogue or using narrative prose as it seemed suitable to him. He also quite often put the characterisation into the mouth of the aggrieved person or victim to make it dramatic. His indebtedness to Earle, Overbury, Breton and others cannot be precisely ascertained. The evidence for a definite conclusion is meagre. The probability is that having read them all, he evolved an individual manner more in accordance with his vision of reality.

We may now proceed to study some of the characters in his novels except that of Robinson Crusoe who belongs to a different category and to whom a separate chapter will be devoted. They are all "daring, resolute, and successful"¹¹, traits of character which, as I have already noticed, De Foe seemed to admire and which, to some extent, redeemed the sordidness of their lives. Although they commit criminal acts, they hate to be idle and they have all long memories for benefits received. Whatever they are to the rest of the world, their mutual loyalty remains firm in the ordeals through which they pass. They are besides cautious and prudent. At some time or other, most of them disguise themselves, pretending to be other than what they are. Moll wears masculine clothes and is known as Gabriel Spencer; Roxana assumes the character and speech of a Quaker; Colonel Jack passes as a Frenchman; Singleton and Quaker William as Persian merchants. All these people undergo some kind of repentance with the excep-

¹¹ Applebee's Journal, October 21, 1721; Lee, vol. II, p. 443.

tion of Roxana who does not have anything more than a kind of moral worry and so while the other books close on a note of happiness more or less, the career of the Fortunate Mistress comes to an end in the midst of a series of disasters which are only hinted at in a closing paragraph and which led another writer to publish a sequel in 1745, now often printed with De Foe's novel as a continuation. The different destiny assigned to Roxana may be due to her being of French extraction, or more probably, to the irreconcilability of sincere repentance with the role of a woman who always chose to be a whore rather than a wife so long as the choice was open.

Both Moll Flanders and Roxana illustrate the moral : "As Covetousness is the Root of all Evil, so Poverty is the worst of all Snares"¹². Its application can also be extended to Singletom and Col. Jack. All De Foe's characters leave the path of honesty because they do not get a chance to live honestly. The wickedness they perpetrate in a state of affluence can be explained by another remark made by Moll Flanders : "there are Temptations which it is not in the Power of Human Nature to resist"¹³. But this can be only sophistry as in *The Fortunate Mistress* where Roxana persuades herself that she is blameless for her aberrations from the path of virtue : "as it was all irresistible, so it was all lawful; for that Heaven would not suffer us to be punish'd for that which it was not possible for us to avoid"¹⁴. The justification came to her when she had accepted the position of a whore to the French Prince.

¹² Moll Flanders, Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. I, p. 203.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 78.

*Moll Flanders*

Accomplished, ready-witted prudent, even worldly wise, Moll Flanders unlike Roxana was passionate and feminine. She was affectionate to her children, a true mother, and her strongest desire was for a home and husband as that of Roxana was for freedom and a dazzling career. She was taken for a great beauty and was aware of the fact¹⁵. Whatever clothes she wore, she was always scrupulously clean, she danced, played on the harpsichord and spinnet and spoke French¹⁶. She had great prudence. When her husband the linen draper spent money recklessly, she saved up against a wet day¹⁷. She went out to steal and rob in the highway, dressed as a man, continuing in the disguise for three weeks but even her associates had no suspicion about her sex.¹⁸ By this means she secured her safety when her partner was caught and punished by hanging. She did not even let her Lancashire husband, whom she loved without affectation, know her name or whereabouts¹⁹. She was also worldly wise; "how necessary it is", she observes, "for all Women who expect anything in the World, to preserve the Character of their Virtue, even when perhaps they may have sacrific'd the Thing itself"²⁰. She was very feminine: she "lov'd nothing in the World better than fine Cloaths"²¹. She was revengeful too. An heiress of her acquaintance who was first woo'd and then abandoned by a captain was taught by her how to bring the man down on his knees. This was contrived very successfully by circulating the most infamous scandal about his character and material

¹⁵ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 14; vol. II, p. 30.

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. I, p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 35.

¹⁹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 170.

²⁰ Ibid., vol. I, p. 146.

²¹ Ibid., vol. I, 117.

prospects till at last he was forced to make his humble submission and apologies for his conduct²². She was clever in argument, to which she would join at times "that known Woman's Rhetorick (tears)"²³. When left by the linen draper, she was quite alone in the world. She had no friends to stand by her and in this extremity, she felt that "the Offer of a good Husband, the most necessary thing in the World to me"²⁴. Again, when the gentleman of Bath whose whore she was for a few years terminated the relationship, she craved for the settled, quiet life of a married woman, "I wanted to be plac'd in a settled State of Living, and had I happen'd to meet with a sober good Husband, I should have been as true a Wife to him as Virtue it self could have form'd"²⁵. Her numerous marriages showed how earnest she was in the quest of a settled life in which she could live quietly and virtuously. She was vicious only by necessity, not out of free choice. She was affectionate as a mother and it was always a painful experience for her to part with her children²⁶.

She had been poor at the beginning and had known abrupt changes from comparative affluence to poverty again. After the death of the bank clerk, one of her many husbands, with whom life for her had been easy and comfortable for some years, she was in poverty once more, and helpless. "In this Distress I had no Assistant, no Friend to comfort or advise me, I sat and cried and tormented myself Night and Day; wringing my Hands, and sometimes raving like a distracted Woman"²⁷. She had been a passionate woman. She loved the

²² Moll Flanders, vol. I, pp. 71-72.

²³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 130. ²⁴ Ibid., vol. I, pp. 76-77.

²⁵ Ibid., vol. I, p. 135.

²⁶ Ibid., vol. I, p. 130f, 185, etc.

²⁷ Ibid., vol. II, p. 3.

eldest son of the family which had given her refuge when she was a girl and had no one to look after her. He was an unscrupulous man, and although he had promised her marriage when circumstances permitted, there was little sincerity of purpose in him. His younger brother proposed to marry her. Upon which "the eldest son" told her that she had better accept the offer. She gave "a look full of Horror at those Words, and turning Pale as Death, was at the very point of sinking down out of the Chair" she sat in²⁸. This was a terrible shock to her. She could not reconcile herself to the idea of being wife to one brother and whore to another and she fell seriously ill, lingering between life and death for weeks. She, however, recovered and married the younger brother with the permission of the family in securing which she showed great prudence. This disappointment in early life made her more realistic in her attitude and on the death of her husband, she wanted to marry again but had decided not to give any importance to love, "I had been trick'd once by that Cheat call'd Love, but the Game was over, I was resolv'd now to be married or nothing, and to be well married or not at all"²⁹.

In *Moll Flanders* we find woman in an incipient mood of revolt against her position of inferiority to man. This appears far more prominently in *The Fortunate Mistress* as we shall presently see. Moll Flanders thinks that in matrimony "the Disadvantage of the Women is a terrible Scandal upon the Men"³⁰. The women have made themselves cheap: "Men have but too much Choice among us; and that some Women may be found, who will Dishonour themselves, be

²⁸ *Moll Flanders*, vol. I, p. 35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 59. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. I, 75.

Cheap, and too Easy to come at; yet if they will have Women worth having, they may find them as uncomeatable as ever"³¹. She deplores the want of courage in women which leads them precipitately into marriages that often turn out to be unhappy. She herself never lacked courage. In fact as she says, "I had always most Courage, when I was in most danger"³², and she had a ready wit which she knew how to use in self-defence. She escaped being taken into custody on a charge of attempted theft at a goldsmith's shop through the cool, courageous manner in which she told the Alderman what made her come there. Her plausible story, invented on the spur of the moment, and her self-possessed manner got her off at the end.

One aspect of prudence in these stories is to discover where trust can be reposed. For this there is no external standard but the question often arises and is solved satisfactorily by De Foe's men and women.. They rely upon a kind of intuition in making the choice of friends into whose hands they put their lives when they are hard-pressed by necessity. Moll puts her life into the hands of her old governess³³ and she was of course quite right in doing so. For she stood by her side as a friend and ally in her greatest ordeal when she lay in the prison of Newgate under a sentence of death. Similarly Roxana put herself into the hands of a Dutch merchant in Paris who saved her from a fiendish Jew.

Moll Flanders was married to many husbands including her half brother. She seemed to have liked them all more or less except her brother husband for whom her love was turned into loathing.

³¹ Moll Flanders, vol. I, p. 74.

³² Moll Flanders, vol. II, p. 93.

³³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 36.



In Virginia where she accompanied her spouse, she learnt with dismay from her mother-in-law the full story of her life. She found that she was her mother and her husband's too. Some years later she returned to England to begin life anew. She had now adventures enough, matrimonial and other. At last she was taken to Newgate as a thief. Here she met her Lancashire husband with whom she lived for about a month before they had parted by mutual consent. Moll Flanders had loved him with a true passion. And it was this love which at Newgate made her more concerned about his fate than her own. For he was confined there like herself with little prospect of anything but a death sentence hanging over him. Her moral regeneration began when she forgot her own misery through her solicitude for her husband's condition : "I was overwhelm'd with Grief for him ; my own Case gave me no Disturbance compar'd to this, and I loaded my self with Reproaches on his Account ; I bewail'd my Misfortunes, and the Ruin he was now come to, at such a Rate, that I relish'd nothing now, as I did before, and the first Reflections I made upon the horrid Life I had liv'd, began to return upon me ; . . . in a Word, I was perfectly chang'd, and become another Body"³⁴. After she had been re-united with her husband in prison, they did not part again as both were now deported to Virginia under a penal sentence.

Moll Flanders may thus be said to stand for the normal desire in every woman for the settled, peaceful life of a home where she can live safely under the care of a protecting husband. She was a true woman while Roxana was temperamentally rather masculine and more inclined to enjoy life than to bear its responsibility. They are comple-

³⁴ Moll Flanders, vol. II, pp. 106-107.



mentary to each other ; the domestic type and the lover of unfettered freedom point to enduring tendencies of the feminine character.

According to De Foe's usual practice, there are not many named characters in *Moll Flanders*. Her first husband, Robin, mentioned by name, is a shadowy figure who comes into some prominence as a seeker of Moll's hand. He is an innocent, inexperienced and rather colourless man. The highway man or "the Lancashire husband" as he is more often called, is introduced by his name accidentally—it is to assist Moll's loud lamentations at his flight after marriage which bring him back for a while. He is generous, well-meaning, with a genuine goodness in his character. Among Moll's other husbands, we have the linen draper, an extravagant man, and the Bank clerk, an honest if somewhat loquacious man ; she was whore to the "eldest son", to a gentleman at Bath and also to a baronet when she was past middle age. Besides these, her friends the "Governess" and the Captain's wife are also left without a name. The governess, who turned pawnbroker to carry on her underground trade, is more carefully described. But they are all satellites of Moll Flanders without any independent existence of their own.

The Fortunate Mistress

Roxana was critical, clear-eyed, opposed to cant or self-deception. If poverty drove her to a career of sin, she later chose it deliberately as a means of preserving her independence. She married twice and each time it brought disaster. The story of her life virtually closed after her second marriage. One of her children to whom she wanted to play the good fairy became a source of her disquiet and unhappiness. Her rejection of the

married state amounted also to a rejection of her children. Hence nemesis came to her in the form of one of her own daughters, pursuing her relentlessly and threatening her destruction. She was "tall, and very well made"³⁵. She was not ignorant that she was very handsome³⁶. So often was she admired for her looks that this could scarcely be a secret to her. The French Prince who made her his mistress was surprised by her beauty when she appeared in déshabillé³⁷ and the Turkish dress she wore later dazzled all from the King downwards who saw her in it. She had taste in dress. The Prince, her lover, told her about her skin that he "could not have believed there was any such Skin, without Paint in the World"³⁸. She herself observed she was not a very indifferent figure as to shape³⁹.

She was "sharp as a Hawk in Matters of common Knowledge; quick and smart in Discourse"⁴⁰, and critical in her observations. As for her education, she "learnt the English Tongue perfectly well" and spoke French which was her mother tongue⁴¹. She later acquired a knowledge of Dutch, Italian and Turkish. She seemed always to find time in the midst of her pleasure-loving life to make additions to her knowledge. She loved to dance. Her marriage with the Brewer, her first husband, was due to their mutual attachment to the art. The flight of the Brewer when he had run through most of his fortune by idleness and extravagance made her face poverty without hope of any help when her landlord, the Jeweller, came to her rescue. Her maid Amy tried to explain that as her husband was as good as dead so far as she was concerned, she could live with

³⁵ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I., p. 3.

³⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 64.

³⁹ Ibid., vol. I, p.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. I, p. 72.

⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. I, p. 3.

³⁸ Ibid., vol. I, p. 82.

⁴¹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 2.

her landlord without sin but she was not prepared for such self-deception. She dismisses it as "Cant" and tells her "if I yield 'tis in vain to mince the Matter, I am a Whore, *Amy*, neither better nor worse, I assure you"⁴². And thus she "sinned with open Eyes"⁴³. In the analysis of the motives that led her to become a whore she is outspoken and courageous. She mentions indeed her poverty as a cause of her fall but her youth too was there to account for it. The Jeweller's endearments "had fir'd my Blood, I confess, and I knew not what to think of it"⁴⁴ and again : "it was a pleasant thing, to be courted, caress'd, embrac'd, and high Professions of Affection made to me by a Man so agreeable and so able to do me good"⁴⁵.

Her opposition to marriage arose from a very simple practical consideration : "while I was a Mistress, it is customary for the Person kept, to receive from them that keep ; but if I shou'd be a wife, all I had then, was given up to the Husband"⁴⁶. This was how she lost her dowry of £2000 to her first husband but the honest Dutch merchant who sought her hand assured her that he would "not touch one Pistole of your Estate"⁴⁷. Her objection, however, was grounded on deeper reasons. She attacked the laws of matrimony by which the woman is reduced to "*an upper-Servant*"⁴⁸ and the man is commanded to command "and binds me, forsooth, to obey you"⁴⁹. She declared, "a Woman was a free Agent, as well as a Man, and was born free, and, cou'd she manage herself suitably, might enjoy that Liberty to as much Purpose as

⁴² *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. I, p. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 171.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 175.



the Men do”⁵⁰. She violently attacked the marriage-contract; for it meant “nothing but giving up Liberty, Estate, Authority, and everything to the Man, and the Woman was indeed, a mere Woman ever after, that is to say, a Slave”⁵¹.

With the picture of marriage, she contrasted the freedom which a woman enjoyed if she stayed unmarried: “while a Woman was single, she was a Masculine in her politic Capacity;...she had then the full Command of what she had, and the full Direction of what she did;...she was a Man in her separate Capacity, to all Intents and Purposes that a Man cou’d be so to himself”⁵². In other respects too, she could imitate a man: “She might entertain a Man, as a man does a Mistress”⁵³. There were other cogent reasons for not marrying the Dutch merchant who believed, however, that his having physical relations with her amounted to her consent to marriage with him. But she held this circumstance as an obstacle to marriage, and told the merchant firmly, “after a Man has lain with me as a Mistress he ought never to lye with me as a Wife; that’s not only preserving the Crime in Memory, but it is recording it in the family”⁵⁴. The poor Dutch merchant had to admit that she was “right in the Main”⁵⁵. Her critical powers were indeed remarkable.

This spirit of proud independence, familiar in our time, was no doubt held to be an expression of

⁵⁰ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 171.

⁵¹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 172. ⁵² Ibid., vol. I, pp. 172-173.

⁵³ Ibid., vol. I, p. 173.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 177, Cp. Lady Brumpton’s remark to Tattle Aid in Steele’s “The Funeral”. . . . “He that is so mean as to marry a woman after an affair with her, will be so base as to upbraid that very weakness. He that marries his wench will use her like his wench” Richard Steele (Mermaid Series Aitken, Act I, Sc. I, p. 21.)

⁵⁵ The Fortunate Mistress, Vol. I. p. 178.



her perversity and was regarded merely as a proof of her fallen state! Some of Roxana's remarks would easily provide justification for such a view. "Thus blinded by my own Vanity", she said, "I threw away the only Opportunity I then had, to have effectually settl'd my Fortunes, and secur'd them for this World; and I am a Memorial to all that shall read my Story, a standing Monument of the Madness and Distraction which Pride and Insinuations from Hell run us into"⁵⁶. But if she was deterred from making a right choice through vanity, she continued in her career without any inclination to give scope to a virtuous impulse to direct her life and later she even congratulated herself on not having married an English lord. "*I was happier than I cou'd be in being Prisoner of State to a Nobleman*; for I took the Ladies of that Rank to be little better"⁵⁷ and her desire was still to be a whore.

"I aimed at being a kept Mistress, and to have a handsome Maintenance"⁵⁸. She was "bent upon an Independency of Fortune". She knew no state of matrimony but what was at best, a state of inferiority, if not bondage..... "I liv'd a Life of absolute Liberty now . . . and seeing Liberty seemed to be the Men's Property, I wou'd be a *Man-Woman*; for as I was born free, I wou'd die so"⁵⁹.

Roxana was no good mother. She had in fact little affection even for her legal children by her first husband. She parts with them without regret and for years makes no enquiries about them. The second son she bore to the French Prince died. She was travelling in Italy at the

⁵⁶ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 187.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 194.

⁵⁸ Ibid., vol. I, 198.

⁵⁹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 199.



time and her callous remark was "...nor...was I sorry the Child did not live, the necessary Difficulties attending it in our travelling being consider'd". When the Dutch merchant tries to persuade her to be married to him in the interest of the child she was then carrying, she does not show the slightest concern for it. And she makes her attitude to it clear by a later remark : "As to the Child, I was not very anxious about it"⁶¹. Some of the motherly feeling that was latent in her was aroused by a kiss she gave her cook-maid and daughter, Susan, who did not know that she was being kissed by her mother : "it was a secret inconceivable Pleasure to me when I kiss'd her, to know that I kiss'd my own Child, my own flesh and Blood, born of my Body;"⁶². The affection which she had never permitted herself to feel nearly overwhelmed her : "No pen can describe, no Words can express, I say, the strange Impression which this thing made upon my Spirits ; I felt some thing shoot thro' my Blood ; my Heart flutter'd ; my Head flash'd and was dizzy, and all within me, *as I thought*, turn'd about, and much ado I had, not to abandon myself to an Excess of Passion at the first sight of her, much more when my Lips touch'd her Face ; I thought I must have taken her in my Arms, and kiss'd her again a thousand times, whether I wou'd or no".⁶³ By neglecting her children and not giving them the affection which was their due, she brought down misery upon herself at the height of her material prosperity. For her daughter Susan pursued her like a Fury.

Roxana was always happy as a mistress.

⁶⁰ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. I, p. 120.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 185.

⁶² Ibid.,

⁶³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 96.

Speaking of her life with the Jeweller, she says, "We liv'd, surely, the most agreeable Life, . . . that ever Two liv'd together"⁶⁴. The French Prince made her happy too; once he spent a fortnight with her. "Never Woman, in such a Station liv'd a Fortnight in so complete a fullness of Humane Delight".⁶⁵ The climax is reached as royal mistress "three Years of the most glorious Retreat, as I call it, that ever Woman had"⁶⁶— Roxana at Pall Mall entertaining the nobility headed by the King reminds us of Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* applauded by her guests, the chief of whom was the Marquess of Steyne. She resembles Becky also in the brilliance of her conversation and her resourcefulness.

In Roxana we do not have the pattern of sin and repentance which provides a certain unifying motive for most of the novels. Roxana does not actually repent. After her marriage with the Dutch merchant, she reflects: "that at length the Life of Crime was over; and that I was like a Passenger coming back from the Indies".⁶⁷ People coming back from the Indies would rather have the world than their souls and the figure, therefore, was well chosen. And yet in Roxana the voice of conscience was not entirely stifled. Happy as she was with the Jeweller, she speaks of "Hours of Intervals and of dark Reflections which came involuntarily in, and thrust in Sighs into the middle of all my Songs, and there woud be, sometimes, a heaviness of Heart which intermingl'd itself with all my Joy" and then she adds, "there can be no substantial satisfaction in a Life of known Wickedness".⁶⁸ Roxana's repentance which came

⁶⁴ *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. I, p. 49.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 55.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 53.



at the end "seem'd to be only the Consequence of my Misery, as my Misery was of my Crime".⁶⁹

In *The Fortunate Mistress*, Amy, Roxana's maid, Susan her cook-maid and daughter, and Sir Robert Clayton, a famous financier, are the only persons to be introduced by their names. We do not know the names of Roxana's husbands and lovers. They are all mentioned either by the rank or title they held or by the profession to which they belonged. Roxana's first husband, the Brewer, was indolent, extravagant and a fool. The Jeweller was honest and businesslike. He immediately set his relations with Roxana on a practical footing. Not able to marry her, being married himself, he drew up a contract by which he guaranteed her maintenance both during his life and after his death⁷⁰. The Jeweller followed honest business principles in all his conduct with Roxana. The French Prince, who stepped into the void created by the Jeweller's murder in Roxana's world, fully conformed to the Princely character. He tells her, "Princes did not court like other Men"⁷¹ and her authority with her derives equally from his rank, "to-Night you shall be my Mistress"⁷². He was lavish in his gifts like a Prince : "As he lov'd like a Prince, so he rewarded like a Prince"⁷³. In fact all that is said about him points to the figure of a Prince, lavish in gift, courtly in manner, fond of his mistress and indifferent to his wife, a beautiful, virtuous and accomplished princess. Roxana next contracted a relationship with a Dutch merchant of Paris. His scrupulous honesty and his solicitude for Roxana are the two points stressed in his characterisation.

⁶⁹ *The Fortunate Mistress*, vol. II, p. 160.

⁷⁰ Ibid., vol. I, 45.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 73.

⁷² Ibid., p. 70.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. I, p. 79.

Amy, the Quaker lady, and Susan are comparatively important characters. Amy was devoted to her mistress whom she served without wages when Roxana had not the wherewithal to pay her and at the end of thirty years of devoted service she risked her life to save her mistress from persecution and exposure by her daughter Susan. In fact she murdered her⁷⁴ and by doing so, estranged herself from her mistress. She had ready wit; she could tell a story and act a part when necessary⁷⁵. In losing Amy, Roxana was completely helpless: "I was, for want of Amy, destitute; I had lost my Right-Hand; she was my Steward, gather'd in my Rents, *I mean my Interest-Money*, and kept my Accounts, and, *in a word, did all my Business*"⁷⁶. She was, in short, an ideal servant, who always put her mistress's interests above her own; who was prepared to part with life and reputation for the sake of her loyalty and devotion. The Quaker lady at whose house Roxana began her reformed life was a true Quaker in her honesty and innocence. Susan who preyed on her mother is the picture of a passionate woman.

Colonel Jack

In *Colonel Jack* we find two strands dexterously woven into the 'hero's' character. The first is the idea that education and upbringing are necessary even to implant in the mind the simple notions of good and evil; the second is that although necessity will lead to a temporary eclipse of a man's good qualities, they cannot be completely submerged by it. This point of view

⁷⁴ The Fortunate Mistress, vol. II, pp. 126, 127, 137.
152. ⁷⁵ Ibid., vol. I, p. 103. ⁷⁶ Ibid., vol. II, p. 145-146.



shows De Doe's faith in human nature and is closely related to his didactic purpose.

Colonel Jack started being a thief when he was nearly fifteen and yet he did not know that to steal was an offence : "I look'd on picking Pockets as a Trade, and thought I was to go Apprentice to it" ⁷⁷. How could he know any better, being a castaway, whose comrades were constantly engaged in robbing and stealing ?

His father told the nurse to whose care he was entrusted as an infant that when he grew of an age to understand it, "she should always take Care to bid me *remember, that I was a Gentleman; and* this, he said, was all the Education he would desire of her for me; for he did not Doubt, he said, but that some Time or other, the very Hint would inspire me with Thoughts suitable to my Birth, and that I would certainly act like a Gentleman, if I believed myself to be so" ⁷⁸. Colonel Jack's career fully justified his father's belief that he would not fail to act like a gentleman if he was told that he was one himself at an impressionable age. For ".....when I began to grow to an Age of understanding, and to know that I was a Thief, growing up in all manner of Villainy, and ripening a pace for the Gallows, it came often into my Thoughts that I was going wrong, that I was in the high Road to the Devil, and several Times would stop short, and ask my self, if this was the Life of a Gentleman?" ⁷⁹. The term 'gentleman' was, however, also used by the rogues with whom he associated in the sense of "a Gentleman Thief". "But my Gentleman that I had my Eye upon, was another Thing quite, tho' I cou'd not really

⁷⁷ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 20, Shakespeare Head Edition.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁷⁹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 73.

tell how to describe it neither⁸⁰. His father sowed the seed and his life bore fruit after much doubt, hesitation and uncertainty which temporarily obscured without obliterating the high ideal he strove to realize. When he stole things like bills which the thieves could not cash without running grave risks, he insisted on their being returned to their owners as they would be a heavy loss for the latter without being of advantage to themselves⁸¹ and once when he took money from a poor old woman, he scarcely knew any peace of mind until he had restored it to her⁸². From that time he did not steal any more⁸³ although not having been brought up to a trade by parents, he did not yet know how to make a living for himself. Later he joined the army and reflected with satisfaction : "I was now in a certain Way of living, which was honest, and which I could say, was not unbecoming a Gentleman"⁸⁴. He left the army and was kidnapped by a Ship's captain who sold him as a servant to a planter in Virginia. He there had to act as overseer of the negro slaves at the plantation of his master. By his kindness to them he won their hearts and made them work harder than they did under the lashes of the whip, then freely used. He makes his experience an argument for a humaner treatment of the negro. Colonel Jack buys himself out of the service of his master and starts as a planter himself, becoming soon a man of substance. He then returns to his country, marries and divorces his wife for misconduct; after which he takes three more wives all of whom die in the course of a few years. He now goes into the army and rises to be a Lt. Colonel. Later he goes back to his Plantation where his

⁸⁰ Colonel Jack, vol. I. p. 73.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 55, 65.

⁸² Ibid., p. 102.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 99.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 124.



divorced wife appears as a deported criminal. She was truly repentant and Col. Jack was once more united to her and was happy.

There are two things in his character which are noticeable because they remind us of De Foe himself, viz., his aptitude for learning and his participation in a rebellion. "he was . . . willing enough, and capable too, to learn any Thing, if he had had any but the Devil for his School-Master"^{ss}. He obtained the King's pardon by special application for having joined the Rebels^{tt}. The first point has already been noticed in Chapter II.

In *Colonel Jack* we have a fairly large number of named characters. But some of these were not true names, like the three Jacks including the "hero". They were called by military ranks by the honest nurse who brought them up, such as Captain, Major and Colonel by way of distinguishing them one from another. The characters imputed to them might come under such distinct categories as "Malicious", "Revengeful", "Courageous" and "Intelligent"^{uu}. Colonel Jack took four wives, one of whom only is mentioned by her name; the first wife was "a wild untam'd Colt"^{ss}; the second was an Italian "Whore"^{tt}; the third was the "Captain's widow"^{uu}. The wild untam'd colt was divorced by him and was reunited to him again, as already noticed. She has been carefully delineated and she is the true "heroine" of the story. There is an explanation for the prominence given to her. In De Foe repentance always contributes to characterisation and no one attains to fullness of stature in its absence; Roxana seems to be the only exception but even in her case there was some kind of

^{ss} *Colonel Jack*, vol. I, p. 5. ^{tt} *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 11.

^{uu} *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 113.

^{tt} *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 57.

^{uu} *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 4-6.

^{uu} *Ibid.*, vol. II, 62.

repentance—something imposed by circumstance rather than voluntarily undergone. Colonel Jack's fourth wife was Moggy who was a "faithful, virtuous, obliging Wife"⁹¹. There were two or three negroes who showed a touching devotion to him in Virginia; the English scholar who became his tutor while serving a penal sentence in the plantations, the Master under whom he worked as overseer—they are all left without a name except the negro Mouchat, and only one or two of their special qualities are noticed with reference to the situation in which they were placed. As in other novels, most of these characters derive whatever vitality they possess from their connexion with the "hero".

Captain Singleton

If in Colonel Jack we have one of Nature's gentlemen, in Singleton we have a natural leader. His parents were rich and he used to have a nurse maid to look after him. He was kidnapped as a child and very early in life he was thrown upon the parish for his support. He "could write a tolerable Hand, understood some *Latin*, and began to have a Smattering of the *Portuguese Tongue*"⁹², also learnt a little of navigation as a result of some voyages in the course of which he met with reverses whose import he was not of an age to understand properly. He was one of the principal agents in causing a mutiny in the ship. "I was but a Boy, as they called me, yet I prompted the Mischief all I could"⁹³ and was sentenced to death by the Captain who, however, finally left him with four others on the shore in Madagascar⁹⁴. There they were

⁹¹ Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 80.

⁹² Captain Singleton, p. 5, Shakespeare Head Edition.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 12.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 13.



joined by twenty-three more people from the ship's crew and they had fire arms and provisions supplied to them. They soon formed themselves into a well-disciplined body for collective action under a captain and planned to march to Mozambique which lay at a distance of near two thousand miles.

Singleton began to act unofficially as leader of this party, all of whom were much older than he. He suggested seizing the first ship they could come at as the only means of delivery from their cast-away condition. They built a canoe and "all came readily into my Project, to cruise about where we were, and see what might offer"⁹⁵. The proposal to seize a ship did not get immediate support. Singleton spoke for it boldly : "Don't tell me, says I, of being a Pyrate, *we must be Pyrates, or any thing, to get fairly our(t) of this cursed Place*"⁹⁶. And then they agreed "~~that~~ our Business was to cruise for any thing we could see"⁹⁷. One of the problems confronting the party was how to carry their baggage. Singleton's solution met with approval : "At last I proposed a Method for them, which after some Consideration, they found very convenient ; and this was to quarrel with some of the Negro Natives, take ten or twelve of them Prisoners, and binding them as Slaves, cause them to travel with us, and make them carry our Baggage"⁹⁸. Soon they engaged the negroes in a fight in which victory was secured through the leadership of Singleton and 60 lusty fellows were taken prisoners for carrying the party's baggage.

Leadership is not an attribute of age but of character as Singleton discovered. Though so young he had already proved his leadership and he saw that the men, a good deal older than he, were

⁹⁵ Captain Singleton, p. 13.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

⁹⁷ Ibid.,

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 62.



apt to be at their wits' end whenever there was a difficult situation to be faced : "tho' my Comrades were all older Men, yet I began to find them void of Counsel, or, as I now call it, Presence of Mind, when they came to the Execution of a thing"⁹⁹. His party attacked the Negroes but when they were not scattered by the first volley of fire, the pirates lost heart. "Upon this Occasion I began to take upon me a little to hearten them up, and to call upon them to load again, and give them another Volley, telling them I would engage, if they would be ruled by me, I'd make the Negroes run fast enough"¹⁰⁰. After this proof of leadership "they would call me nothing but Seignior Capitanio"¹⁰¹. Later he formally leads them "It was my Lot to march by Land, and be Captain of the whole Caravan."¹⁰².

One characteristic of Singleton which justifies his leadership is "an insatiable Thirst after Learning in general" instilled into him by the Gunner¹⁰³. In the second part he is completely overshadowed by Quaker William.

Quaker William

If Singleton is the 'hero' in the first part of the novel, Quaker William holds the same position in the second part where the excitement of piratical adventures replaces that of travel through the wilderness of an uncharted region. Quaker William is a wise counsellor, just as Singleton is a capable leader. His initial characterisation does not seem to be entirely satisfactory : "We had one very merry Fellow here, a Quaker, whose Name was William Walters. . . . He was a comick Fellow in-

⁹⁹ Captain Singleton, p. 66.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 69.



deed, a Man of very good solid Sense, and an excellent Surgeon"¹⁰⁴. But he does not give the reader the impression of being "a comick fellow". He seems on the other hand self-possessed, weighty of speech, if ironical in manner, and an extremely alert observer. He might have seemed comical when he stipulated with the pirates that the captain of his sloop must certify that he was taken away forcibly. But this indeed was a measure of prudence and Singleton describes the scene : "Accordingly I fell a swearing at him, and called to my Men to tye his Hands behind him, and so we put him into our Boat, and carry'd him away"¹⁰⁵. True to his Quaker principles William would not take part in any fighting. He made that clear at the very beginning but the pirates could always depend upon him for sound advice. When a ship they were pursuing tried to put them on a wrong scent, William came forward and told them that the direction the ship took was so far away from the usual route that it was clear she would change it as soon as night came on. They now directed their ship to the Bay of All Saints where the next morning shortly after their arrival they surprised the ship they had given chase to, without difficulty¹⁰⁶. A Portuguese Commander of a Man of War carrying 46 guns pursued the pirates; they had little hope of escape but still the flight was continued. William pointed out their mistake and suggested the course they should take. If they are going to be overtaken, nothing can be gained by running away. "Why then, Friend, says the dry Wretch, why dost thou run from her still, when thou seest she will overtake thee? Will it be better for us to be overtaken further off than here? Much

¹⁰⁴ Captain Singleton, p. 174.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 181.

at one for that, says I ; why what would you have us do ? Do ! says he, let us not give the poor Man more Trouble than needs must ; let us stay for him, and hear what he has to say to us ; he will talk to us in Powder and Ball said I : Very well then, says he, if that be his Country Language, we must talk to him in the same, must we not¹⁰⁷? The ships soon engaged in an exchange of shots. William stayed on deck, giving the Men a dram to encourage them : "The Shot flew about his Ears as thick as may be supposed in such an Action . . . but there was *William*, as composed, and in as perfect Tranquillity as to Danger, as if he had been over a Bowl of Punch, only very busy securing the Matter, that a Ship of Fourty six Guns should not run away from a Ship of Eight and Twenty"¹⁰⁸. Two portholes were beaten into one, making a suitable opening for entry of which advantage was now taken by the pirates at William's suggestion. William kept the business of the pirates steadily before him. He showed them the folly of chasing a Man of War when they were directed to do so by Captain Wilmot : "Why says *William* gravely, I only ask what is thy Business, and the Business of all the People thou hast with thee ? Is it not to get Money ? Yes, *William*, it is so, in our honest Way : And wouldest thou, says he, rather have Money without Fighting, or Fighting without Money"¹⁰⁹. He was prepared to give advice but not to accept the responsibility of leadership¹¹⁰. Probably he did not like to provide too direct evidence against having been forcibly made a pirate or perhaps his Quaker conscience did not allow him to play the rôle. The pirates saw a ship carrying only Negroes. William told them to seize it without firing a shot which they

¹⁰⁷ Captain Singleton, pp. 183-184.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 188.



did. Singleton wanted to cut their throats, for they had evidently made away with the whitemen. The Quaker who had a kind disposition intervened in behalf of the Negroes and told his comrades that they would have done the same thing if they were in the position of the Negroes who "had really the highest Injustice done them, to be sold for Slaves without their Consent"¹¹¹. He also opposed the proposal of torturing them so as to get an account from them of what became of the Europeans. They would not be able to attend to the question not knowing any English and the proposed punishment will therefore be for ignorance of the English language. William later sold the slaves, 600 in number, for a good price with the help of a story he invented. William had astonishing self-possession : The ship's crew of hardened pirates including Singleton were terrified when she was struck by lightning : "not a Man . . . had Presence of Mind to apply to the proper Duty of a Sailor, except Friend William ; and had not he run very nimbly, and with a Composure that I am sure I was not Master of, to let go the Fore-sheet. . . we . . . perhaps have been overwhelm'd in the Sea"¹¹². His courage in an encounter with "Indians" hidden within the hollow of an oak tree extorted from Singleton the compliment that he "had the Heart of a Lion"¹¹³. When the pirates wanted to take revenge on the Sinhalese in Ceylon on account of their conduct resented by every one Willian successfully opposed the plan nor did he allow them to accept the invitation of the people to land when a storm drove them back to Ceylon and their ship lay aground. A Dutchman who was practically a prisoner in the court of the Sinhalese King was car-

¹¹¹ Captain Singleton, p. 191.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 236.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 257.

ried off by the pirates by means of a clever stratagem William thought of.

Even William's self-restraint could break, and it is at one such rare moment that we have the most satisfying glimpse into his character. He had a widow sister in London who had much ado to support her four children yet she sent him "the little Bill for Five Pounds upon an *English Merchant in Venice*"¹¹⁴ so that he might not lack the means to return to England. He was moved to tears by this proof of affection. These tears reveal a tenderness that lay under a hard crust of habitual self-restraint and reserve, and make him fully human and alive.

Quaker William was inclined to be reticent about personal matters and we have very little opportunity of knowing the nature of his repentance but a remark of his about its necessity had a great effect upon Singleton. He was all for throwing away his money, committing suicide and he even cried out in his sleep the story of his crimes. All these hysterical symptoms were, however, checked by a few dry words spoken by William. The latter was without any kind of excess and was perfectly well-balanced in his attitude. He saw things in a clear, unemotional light. He guided Singleton's repentance into the proper channel and made him realise his responsibility in the new life he proposed to live.

William in fact knew how to speak the word in season. Hence he is the best of all counsellors. Speaking about Singleton's resolve to shoot himself so as to "put an End to a miserable Life", William observed : "for tho' on this side Death you can't be sure you will be damned at all, yet the Moment you step on the other side of Time, you are sure

¹¹⁴ Captain Singleton, p. 330.



of it; for when 'tis done, 'tis not to be said then that you will, but that you are damned¹¹⁵. Quaker William is one of the most vital characters which we owe to De Foe. He is both a type and an individual. His rather dry humour¹¹⁶ gives him his individuality while his unflinching resoluteness of temper in danger and his capacity to see things in their true relation suggest the counsellor *per excellence*.

Among minor characters Captain Wilmot is introduced by his name but this fact adds little vividness to his characterisation. The Carpenter, Cutler, and the Gunner, the Negro Prince, the Portuguese Pilot, etc., are known to us only by their rank or profession. They do the job appropriate to the description given of them. The Gunner is the most important of all the unnamed persons in the story. We are told that he was "an excellent Mathematician, a good Scholar, and Compleat Sailor" and one of his observations made to Singleton undoubtedly represents De Foe's own personal opinion: "Knowledge was the first Step to Preferment"¹¹⁷. He was Singleton's instructor and joint leader with him for the perilous journey over 1800 miles of Africa's uncharted wilderness from Madagascar to Mozambique.

After examination of the De Foe gallery of characters it may be remarked that surely it is not impoverished by want of psychology. Moll Flanders expressing her abhorrence of the "eldest son's" suggestion to marry the younger brother, or wringing her hands in despair at her plight when her husband, the bank clerk, dies leaving her and her children completely unprovided or forgetting

¹¹⁵ Captain Singleton, p. 325.

¹¹⁶ Singleton's description of William as "dry wretch"

(p. 183).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

her own troubles through concern for her husband's in Newgate prison are by no means deficient in psychological knowledge. Similarly Roxana's forgotten motherhood rushing back on her when she kisses her daughter, or her yielding herself to the Jeweller because it is pleasant to be kissed, embraced and made much of after a prolonged struggle with hunger and misery, are things with which we feel entirely satisfied. In *Col. Jack* childhood is depicted with full understanding of its psychology—especially memorable is the scene in which Jack in trying to place his money in the hole of a tree for safety it slips away through a hollow. He is overpowered with childish grief at the loss of his treasure which turns into joy when he discovers it lying at the foot of the tree¹¹¹. These scenes show that although no professional psychologist, an impossibility in his day, De Foe did not regard human beings as merely doing things but also as having feelings which coloured their action. Colonel Jack striving to realise an ideal to which his birth provided his only title in a world in which every circumstance was set against him; Singleton putting forward the view that leadership is independent of age and may be exercised by one still in teens by virtue of character; Quaker William with his dry humour telling the pirates when it is to their advantage to engage in action, are certainly no ordinary contribution to the novel.

By the side of Quaker William Singleton loses some of his singularity as leader. For the mastery of self and the capacity to see things closely and clearly in a spirit of detachment have more in them than the gift of leading people and telling them what they should do authoritatively when an emergency arose.

¹¹¹ *Colonel Jack*, pp. 27-29, vol. I.

CHAPTER IX

ROBINSON CRUSOE

"as their heavy imagination can supply nothing, they judge of what appears, and not of what is design'd".

Review, July 4, 1704, Facsimile Book II, p. 153.

I have said that the three phases of Crusoe's spiritual evolution are Impulse, Reason and Faith. In his adventures too these phases appear—Impulse driving him from home and the prospects of a settled career till after slavery, shipwreck and other experiences he is cast on a desert island. Alone in the island, impulse has no further occasion to tempt and delude him and he now organises his life by means of the discipline of reason. He builds himself a home and fortifies it; he ensures a supply of the necessaries for his existence but reason has no power to lift up his spirit and cast away from him the fits of depression which robbed him of the power to work. These deficiencies of reason he corrected by achieving faith, which gave him the patience, endurance and courage so necessary in his encounters with savages and other human enemies.

The impulse which launched him on a career of disastrous adventures is described at the outset as an inclination to go to sea, having upon him the compelling power of fate: "there seem'd to be something fatal in that Propension of Nature tending directly to the Life of Misery which was to befall me"¹. It is to be noticed that there is anticipation at this very early stage of the misery which Crusoe was to experience in the course of his life.

¹ Robinson Crusoe, Shakespeare Head Edition, vol. I, p. 2.

There are many such anticipations in *Robinson Crusoe*. Along with the "hints", "notices", "impressions", "dreams", etc., which guide the 'hero' at critical moments they serve to create an atmosphere in which we may appropriately witness the drama of sin, atonement and deliverance. We shall return later to the consideration of this subject.

Crusoe is overmastered by his impulse, and although for a while he resolved to submit to his father's wishes regarding his career, he found it impossible to resist his inclination and in his nineteenth year, a twelvemonth after his wise father had told him, "that if I did take this foolish Step, God would not bless me, and I would have Leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his Counsel when ther~~re~~ might be none to assist in my Recovery"², he did indeed take the foolish step against which he was warned, and sailed from Hull by a ship going to London. The experiment ended in disaster. The ship went down in a storm, although he and the other passengers escaped un-hurt. If he had now returned home, "my Father, an Emblem of our Blessed Saviour's Parable, had even kill'd the fatted Calf for me"³. He could see that this would be the most reasonable course for him to take. "I had several times loud Calls from my Reason and my more composed Judgment to go home, yet I had no Power to do it"⁴. It was not until long after this that Reason had any influence on his acts. His impulse was like fate and he was borne onward, helplessly. Crusoe analyses the irrational temper shown by him at this date, assuming it to be a common attribute of youth who "are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent;

² *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 14. ⁴ *Ibid.*,



not ashain'd of the Action for which they ought justly to be esteemed Fools, but are ashain'd of the returning, which only can make them be esteem'd wise Men⁵. "An irresistible reluctance" to return home prevailed with him and he took a voyage to Guinea which proving highly satisfactory from a business point of view, filled him with "aspiring thoughts" and it was as a "Guinea Trader" that he was soon after captured by a Turkish Rover and made a slave—a surprising change of circumstances "from a Merchant to a miserable Slave"⁶, but in his captivity he continued vigilant and at the end of about two years he made his escape. After this he was settled as a planter in Brazil with very good prospects before him. But he was to be "the wilful Agent of all my own Miseries" and the "foolish inclination of wandering abroad"⁷ launched him upon yet another adventure which cast him on a desolate island after shipwreck. He was requested by some planters to act as supercargo of a vessel for bringing negro slaves and he embraced the proposal, obeying "blindly the Dictates of my Fancy rather than my Reason"⁸. Cast on the desolate island, the impulse that had brought him to this disaster dried up by the necessity of the situation in which he now found himself. The first mark of the change appeared when he realized that "It was in vain to sit still and wish for what was not to be had, and this Extremity rouz'd my Application"⁹. In salvaging the wrecked ship, which lay near the shore of the island, he acted in a prompt and rational temper and when after some twelve visits to it, a storm sent it down to the bottom, he found consolation from reason and the

⁵ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 16.

⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

⁹ Ibid., p. 55.



consciousness of his own unsparing industry : "That I had lost no time, nor abated no Diligence to get every thing out of her that could be useful to me",¹⁰.

As we have seen in Chapter VII his religion at this time was a form of rationality. In reviewing his solitary condition in the island he was little inclined to be thankful for such a life but soon after realized that such an attitude was wrong and concluded reasonably, "All Evils are to be consider'd with the Good that is in them, and with what worse attends them"¹¹. How faith gradually subdued him, enlarging his views, has already been discussed at length and no more will be said on the subject again. We shall now proceed to see how Crusoe set about to supply his material needs, having reason only to guide him in the new task.

He had to make some furniture like chairs and tables, "for without these I was not able to enjoy the few Comforts I had in the World"¹², but he had no experience and no knowledge for the purpose. But this did not deter him. "I must needs observe", he goes on to remark, "that as Reason is the Substance and Original of the Mathematicks, so by stating and squaring every thing by Reason, and by making the most rational Judgment of things, every Man may be in time Master of every mechanick Art"¹³. This challenges our curiosity and we see him at work, producing not only chairs, tables, boxes, shovels, baking bread and making pottery but becoming also a tailor for his needs. But now and then the author adds to the realism of the description by declaring that Crusoe could not make a wheel barrow or a casket to be hooped.

¹⁰ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 65.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 71.

¹² Ibid., p. 77.

¹³ Ibid., p. 77.



Although at the beginning of his confinement in the island, Reason served to master his despondency¹⁴, it had no power to give him any comfort when certain depressing thoughts came to him, a little later. He was greatly afflicted in spirit when he remembered how he had refused the help and assistance of his parents "who wou'd have lifted me into the World, and wou'd have made every Thing easy to me"¹⁵. His misery was aggravated by ill health and in this situation he sought the mercy of God by repentance and fervent prayers. Reason had helped him to secure some degree of comfort in the island and he had fortified himself also against the danger of a sudden assault. But the peace of mind and a contented spirit were strangers to him until he had thrown himself upon the mercy of God and had given humble thanks for the good fortune of surviving the shipwreck and discovering as it were a table spread in the wilderness for his health and nourishment. He had accomplished a good deal by the exercise of his reason but without the help of faith all his sweat and toil would have gone in vain. For a discontented soul would have reduced him to a state of impotence and rendered him completely unfit for the great ordeal that awaited him. He had in front of him a different and more dangerous enemy than any he had so far known, and if he was to survive, all his prudence and personal courage were needed to see him through. The strength of character which he had acquired in solitude by his deliberate surrender to the divine Will, the resourcefulness which his solitary situation had taught him and the habit of making exact calculations which his rational temper had bred in him were now all necessary for defend-

¹⁴ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 74.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

ing himself against the savages whose advent in the island was no accident. From the time of his coming to the desolate island, Crusoe had thought of the danger from cannibals : "My Thoughts were now wholly employ'd about securing my self against either Savages, if any should appear, or wild Beasts, if any were in the Island"¹⁶. Savages and human enemies in general present so many incalculable factors that Reason alone cannot fully cope with the problem. Crusoe, now strong in his faith, possessed all the equipment necessary for an encounter with these barbarians should any visit the island. His attitude to the cannibals was marked by moderation and tolerance and when they came, he took his measures promptly and successfully, avoiding any act of wanton bloodshed or cruelty.

That the faith which guided Crusoe in the island meant a profound change in him would appear if we went back a little to consider his earlier conduct. He neglected his duties to his parents and to God when impulse drove him along like a rolling stone. At Brazil he was so little heedful of his religion that he conformed to the Catholic worship, "I had made no Scruple of being openly of the Religion of the Country"¹⁷; for the religious conscience did not awaken in him till after he had submitted for some time to the exclusive sway of reason during his first year in the island. He himself did not at a later date approve of his conduct in Brazil : "I began to regret my having profess'd my self a Papist"¹⁸.

It is to be noticed that Crusoe subjugated the inferior by the application of what was morally a superior force—reason reduced matter to shapes of

¹⁶ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 65.

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. II, p. 84.

¹⁸ Ibid.



various kinds that suited his convenience but faith was needed before earth yielded him the harvest that sustained him : "I foresaw that in time, it wou'd please God to supply me with Bread"¹⁹. The savages were overcome by him but it was not the sword or the gun to which he trusted for his victory ; he commended himself "to the Divine Protection" and earnestly prayed to God "to deliver me out of the Hands of the Barbarians"²⁰ and when he decided to rescue the savage who was to be his "Man Friday" from his pursuers he did so because he was directed by a superior Power : "I was call'd plainly by Providence to save this poor Creature's Life"²¹.

The story of the savages fits into the island scheme and their advent, long foreseen, as already stated, and provided for, reveals aspects of Crusoe's character which would have otherwise gone unrecognized. The episode brings out his courage, moderation, faith, prudence and humanity. It is led up to with the utmost care and deliberation. There is first the startling discovery of the footprint which greatly disturbed Crusoe's mental equilibrium and made him move warily looking before and behind him with every step he took. Then he saw the cannibals from a safe distance and the remains of their feast²². On the course of action he should adopt in case he saw them again he began now to reflect and was at first inclined to be Quixotic in his zeal to suppress their savage rites, but later religion and prudence united in suggesting less drastic measures. When the savages came, they did not merely break the solitude for a while by their invasion but provided

¹⁹ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 185.

²⁰ Ibid., vol. I, p. 211. ²² Ibid., vol. I, p. 190.

²¹ Ibid., p. 235, vol. I.



Crusoe unintentionally with a servant, and companion, changing the island scene for its solitary dweller. After the unusual excitement caused by this visit, Crusoe settles down to his quiet life with his new companion and together they spend much time in religious discussions. But the probability that the wild men would come again remained. The withdrawal of the savages after Friday's rescue prepared the reader for a repetition of the invasion — perhaps they would come to look for the two men they had lost as they could not know that they were killed while in pursuit of Friday. But though they came again, it was not with this object and the element of unexpectedness heightens the interest of the episode without in the least spoiling its naturalness when we learn that the occasion that brought them to the island was a cannibal feast signifying a local victory they had won, and one of their prisoners was a Spaniard. Crusoe who saw their canoes proposed not to interfere but wanted to find out what they came about deciding to "act then as God should direct"²². When, however, he espied the European captive brought by the savages for their feast, he dramatically released him from their hands, killing and wounding most of the cannibals with the assistance of his "Man Friday" whose father was soon discovered in one of the canoes awaiting to be dressed as meat by his relentless captors.

The Spaniard had sixteen of his countrymen staying with some friendly savages by whom they were hospitably entertained and his proposal was to bring them over to the island. After grains in sufficient quantity had been harvested for these men, he went away with Friday's father to fetch them. Before the time of his return was due,

²² Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 20.



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²³ Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 20.



Friday saw a boat coming ashore which he announced to his master as that of the Spaniard arriving back with his countrymen. Here there is a further element of unexpectedness—and a series of new adventures. Although this could hardly be regarded as a sequel to anything so far narrated, the events that follow are nevertheless true to nature and do not at the same time lack artistic justification. The coming of the ship's mutineers with the Captain, the Mate and a passenger as prisoners is in no way connected with the plot so far unfolded yet such occurrences cannot be altogether ruled out as impossible. The inclusion of this exciting drama is De Foe's recognition of the fact that incalculable things happen everywhere—even at a remote little island.

The plot so far considered is well-knit. There is nothing in it that can be omitted with advantage. If Dr Johnson paid it the compliment, rarely deserved by any work, of wishing it longer²⁴, the desirable extension was not at any rate offered by the author when he produced a continuation in the shape of *The Farther Adventures*. In fact after Crusoe leaves the Island, the enchantment falls from him and his land adventures appear entirely pointless. The howling of the wolves in the snows seems a good deal overdone and we feel that Crusoe would have done well to avoid his encounter with the wild animals and to conclude his journey back on a quiet note for the artistic integrity of his "Surprizing Adventures". In *The Farther Adventures* Crusoe gives the lie direct to his conversion by declaring as justification for the

²⁴ "Was there ever anything written by mere man" asked Dr. Johnson, "that was wished longer by its readers, except *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress*". Quoted by Thomas Wright in *The Life of Daniel De Foe*, Bi-centenary Edition, London: 1931, p. 249.



travels and adventures he undertook in old age : "mine was the Notion of a mad rambling Boy, that never cares to see a Thing twice over"²⁵. He is back on impulse again²⁶.

If the question is asked, on what does the appeal of *Robinson Crusoe* rest ? The answer will be, on its carefully constructed plot, its profound optimism, and its style. The plot has, as it were, a progressive rhythm which brings into close connexion the story of Crusoe's mind with the story of his adventures. There is an interdependence between the two; impulse, for example, leads to the distressful adventures and reason comes to his assistance in his misery, directing his energies into new channels for his safety. But reason breaks down when he is assailed by despondency and Faith now extends its boundaries so that he may be victorious against all enemies, seen and unseen. Thus giant Despair is overcome, the faithless savage is laid under the heels and the Christian is delivered from his bonds. In a way these adventures are almost an externalisation of his mental and spiritual states and cannot be fully appreciated without reading them in their special context.

Throughout his years of solitude Crusoe never abandoned hope. Attracted by a pleasant site in the Island, he thought of building his home there but dropped the idea as this would in effect mean a rejection of the hope of delivery from his confinement, cutting him off from a view of the sea, "to enclose my self among the Hills and Woods, in

²⁵ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. III, p. 111.

²⁶ It is, however, necessary to treat "The Farther Adventures" as an entirely separate book (as for example "Paradise Regained" is quite separate from "Paradise Lost", or "Anthony and Cleopatra" quite separate from "Julius Caesar".)



the Center of the Island, was to anticipate my Bondage'"²⁷. He taught himself to look upon the bright side of things—to cultivate a hopefulness of disposition whatever happened to him. After the discovery of the footprint, he was terror-stricken for some days but rallied under the influence of the thought that his position was certainly better than if it had been instead an encounter with the savages without due warning. He took care to show that there were circumstances which could have been easily worse than his own. Faith and Reason united in making him industrious and optimistic.

De Foe's style accounts in a large measure for the popularity of *Robinson Crusoe*. Whether it is external nature or an internal mood, an odd incident or a sensational experience, whether it is the height of joy or the depth of misery, De Foe's style is always equal to the occasion. He observes economy of expression, avoiding embellishments of every kind, especially when the situation to be described is no ordinary one. When Crusoe was swallowed up by the sea after the shipwreck, near the desert Island, he tried to keep himself afloat and safe but the odds were too heavy against him. In one plain sentence which has all the ease of colloquial speech he brings the whole scene before the reader : "I saw the Sea come after me as high as a great Hill, and as furious as an Enemy which I had no Means or Strength to contend with"²⁸. In describing the relief he felt when the possibility of being carried away helplessly by the force of current in a small boat was averted, he uses images which are readily appreciated and which at the same time point to some of De Foe's special interests that soon found literary expression :

²⁷ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 116.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

"They who know what it is to have a Reprieve brought to them upon the Ladder, or to be rescued from Thieves just a going to murther them, or, who have been in such like Extremities, may guess what my present Surprise of Joy was, and how gladly I put my Boat into the Stream of this Eddy, and the Wind also freshning, how gladly I spread my Sail to it, running chearfully before the Wind, and with a strong Tide or Eddy under Foot"²⁹. Crusoe's desire for society has been effectively described more than once. In the following sentence we see the strength of the feeling within him so well because we seem to read out of an intimate journal where everything that is said closely corresponds to what is felt : "In all the Time of my solitary Life, I never felt so earnest, so strong a Desire after the Society of my Fellow-Creatures, or so deep a Regret at the want of it"³⁰. Here is a most exciting situation conveyed in a very few words : "as I was reading in the Bible, and taken up with very serious Thoughts about my present Condition, I was surpriz'd with a Noise of a Gun as I thought fir'd at Sea"³¹. Crusoe's manner in the following is almost hesitating lest he should overstate or be otherwise inaccurate and yet little can be done to add to the horror of such a picture : "I presently found there was no less than nine naked Savages, sitting round a small Fire, they had made, not to warm them ; for they had no need of that, the Weather being extreme hot ; but as I suppos'd, to dress some of their barbarous Diet, of humane Flesh, which they had brought with them, whether alive or dead I could not know"³². In quiet scenes too, De Foe is equally effective. Some birds were ruining the prospects

²⁹ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 162.

³⁰ Ibid., vol. I, p. 217.

³¹ Ibid., p. 214.

³² Ibid., p. 211.

of a good harvest and Crusoe had to use his gun to scare them away : "I had no sooner shot but there rose up a little Cloud of Fowls, which I had not seen at all, from among the Corn it self."³³. But they were cunning creatures and meant to return when he was away—"and then coming away I could easily see the Thieves sitting upon all the Trees about me, as if they only waited till I was gone away"³⁴. These descriptions show De Foe's visual imagination on which a good deal has already been said in previous chapters. Of a cat sitting on one of his chests he writes : "She sat very compos'd, and unconcern'd, and look'd full in my Face, as if she had a Mind to be acquainted with me"³⁵. There were little surprises too in his domestic life and they are described with his usual aptness and economy. After his return from his excursion in a boat round the island which threatened to cost him dear, he fell into a deep slumber from which he was awakened "by a Voice calling me by my Name several times, 'Robin', 'Robin', 'Robin Crusoe', 'poor Robin Crusoe', 'where are you Robin Crusoe'?, Where are you? Where have you been?....I did not wake thoroughly, but dozing between sleeping and waking, thought I dream'd that some Body spoke to me : But as the Voice continu'd to repeat 'Robin Crusoe', 'Robin Crusoe' at last I began to wake more perfectly, and was at first dreadfully frighted, and started up in the utmost Consternation : But no sooner were my Eyes open, than I saw my Poll sitting on the Top of the Hedge; and immedately knew that it was he that spoke to me"³⁶.

³³ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 134.

³⁴ Ibid.,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 164-165.

The question whether *Robinson Crusoe* is romance, allegory or symbolism cannot be fully answered without a brief examination of the thoughts which arise in the "hero's" mind as a result of his experiences in solitude. One important element in these reflections is Crusoe's tendency to see the universal in the particular experiences that befal him. In his island, he was at the beginning cast down by the hopelessness of his situation but as soon as he saw that he could support life with the help of the resources open to him, he reflected : "there was scarce any Condition in the World so miserable, but there was something *Negative* or something *Positive* to be thankful for in it"³⁷. He reverts to the same idea many years later : "I learn'd here again to observe, that it is very rare that the Providence of God casts us into any Condition of Life so low, or any Misery so great, but we may see something or other to be thankful for; and may see others in worse Circumstances than our own"³⁸. The attitude expressed in these remarks is in fact an argument for cultivating contentment. To bring home this lesson on contentment there is an apt illustration in Crusoe's own experience. Once he takes his canoe to sail round the island when he is carried away by the force of the current and despaired of being able to return to the island, so often regarded by him in the past as a place of misery for him : "I stretch'd out my Hands to it with eager Wishes. O happy Desart, said I, I shall never see thee more.... Then I reproach'd my self with my unthankful Temper, and how I had repin'd at my solitary Condition; and now what would I give to be on Shore there again"³⁹. One of

³⁷ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 76.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.



the beliefs' repeatedly stated in De Foe's novels is the idea that the source of ruin and destruction is often transformed into one of deliverance. De Foe recalls in this remark his own experience in the Newgate prison. Crusoe in saving the Spaniard from the clutches of the savages and the Captain from his mutinous crew saw this eminently illustrated : "How frequently in the Course of our Lives", he observes, "the Evil which in it self we seek most to shun, and which when we are fallen into it, is the most dreadful to us, is oftentimes the very Means or Door of our Deliverance, by which alone we can be rais'd again from the Affliction we are fallen into"⁴⁰. Crusoe had craved for human companionship in his solitude yet he was filled with dismay when he saw the footprint in the sand and inferred that human beings had been on the island. He remarks on the instability of human desires on the basis of this experience : "How strange a Chequer Work of Providence is the Life of Man! and by what secret differing Springs are the Affections hurry'd about as differing Circumstances present! To Day we love what to Morrow we hate; to Day we seek what to Morrow we shun; to Day we desire what to Morrow we fear"⁴¹. As he had never desired the society of savages but had on the other hand gone in fear of it from the beginning, these remarks would hardly fit his case yet as a reflection on the uncertain character of human desire nothing more profound could have been said. The explanation for a remark which does not suit the context may perhaps be found in the fact that Crusoe's adventures are being used throughout by the author to convey some fundamental truths or symbolism and

⁴⁰ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, pp. 209-210.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 180.

in the particular example, although the idea he wanted to state was clearly present in his mind, he did not contrive a situation in which such a generalisation would be legitimate. After he saw the foot-print in the sand, Crusoe was paralysed by fear and felt that "Fear of Danger is ten thousand Times more terrifying than Danger it self, when apparent to the Eyes"⁴². His religious meditations could not be peacefully continued in the midst of the fears which now afflicted him and so he could bear testimony : "that a Temper of Peace, Thankfulness, Love and Affection, is much more the proper Frame for Prayer than that of Terror and Discomposure; and that under the Dread of Mischief impending, a Man is no more fit for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God, than he is for Repentance on a sick Bed"⁴³. Later on he had reason to believe that savages had often visited the island and as he had no knowledge of it, neither did he have any fear on the score. In this limitation of human power to know everything about the possibilities of danger, there is reason to be thankful. For not knowing of them, a man can go free of care. Crusoe's reflections in this connexion are somewhat unorthodox yet entirely true : "How infinitely Good that Providence is, which has provided in its Government of Mankind, such narrow bounds to his Sight and Knowledge of Things, and though he walks in the midst of so many thousand Dangers, the Sight of which, if discover'd to him, would distract his Mind, and sink his Spirits ; he is kept serene, and calm, by having the Events of Things hid from his Eyes, and knowing nothing of the Dangers which surround him"⁴⁴. Crusoe

⁴² Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 184.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 189.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 227-228.



speaks repeatedly of the necessity of prudence. His point of view on this subject is succinctly given in *Farther Adventures* from which we accordingly quote it : "human Prudence has the Authority of Providence to justify it"⁴⁵. He never slackened in his prudence during his long confinement in the desolate island. When he rescued the Spaniard from the savages and learnt that sixteen fellow countrymen of the former would be happy to find refuge in his island, he did not take it for granted that his life would be safe at their hands because of the gratitude he could suppose them to entertain for him as their benefactor : he entirely discards such an easy-going view. ". . . Gratitude was no inherent Virtue in the Nature of Man ; nor did Men always square their Dealings by the Obligations they had receiv'd, so much as they did by the Advantages they expected"⁴⁶.

Crusoe repeatedly speaks of "secret hints" and "impressions" coming to his aid and influencing his judgement for his good. His advice is "not to slight such secret Intimations of Providence"⁴⁷. For he himself owed his safety to this mysterious agency more than once. When he is uncertain if he should visit a wrecked ship lying not far from his island, his doubts are resolved by the "Impression" that he should go there, which "was so strong upon my Mind, that it could not be resisted"⁴⁸. His visit proved useful. For he obtained a supply of clothing and other useful articles of which he had run short. When he sees the mutineers in the ship which "I had Reason to believe was Mann'd by my Country-men, and consequently Friends"⁴⁹, he was warned by "some

⁴⁵ Robinson Crusoe, vol. II, p. 174.

⁴⁶ Ibid., vol. II, p. 34. ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 219.

⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. I, p. 203.

⁴⁹ Ibid., vol. II, pp. 40-41.



secret Doubts" . . . bidding me keep upon my Guard"⁵⁰. His life would have been imperilled if he had ignored the warning. Returning to England from Lisbon, he had a strange aversion to taking the sea route and it turned out that the warning was well grounded. For the two ships he had to choose between both came to grief.. Besides these examples there are a few more including the dreams, also found in other novels as already noticed in Chapter VII, and the purpose of which seems, so far as *Robinson Crusoe* is concerned, to heighten the effect of seriousness belonging to the story. For here, the author appears to remind the reader, is more than a mere story, more than an attempt to divert the mind. The anticipations, of which there are many in *Robinson Crusoe*⁵¹, also tend to the same end. For even if they take away something from the surprise, and weaken the suspense, they contribute to the serious element in the narrative and underline the allegoric motive or symbolism which runs through the whole. The supernatural hints etc., and the anticipations may also be viewed as part of the atmosphere in which the vindication of the ways of God to man can justly be demonstrated.

In his remarks on *Robinson Crusoe*, De Foe has laid stress on two things in particular, namely, that it is an allegory and that it is also history, briefly "an allusive allegoric history"⁵². According to his view the allegory has a structural function besides the moral one of improvement. ". . . parables and the inventions of men, published historically, are once for all related, and,

⁵⁰ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 41.

⁵¹ Ibid., vol. I, 2, 4, 6, 15, 20, 39, 42, 172, 187, 190, 214, 230, vol. II, 74 etc.

⁵² *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*, Aitken, vol. III, p. 101.

the moral being drawn, the history remains allusive only as it was intended⁵³. Without this edifying motive drawn from allegory, stories are liable to become amorphous and as he says, "real stories", "like the old 'Gallery of Venice', which had been so often new vamped, doubled, and redoubled, that there was not one piece of the first timber in her, have been told wrong so often, and so many ways, till there would not be one circumstance of the real story left in the relating"⁵⁴. In our analysis of the plot of *Robinson Crusoe* we have already seen the moral element providing the framework of the story in which the adventures fit into a scheme dominated by the "hero's" progressively changing attitude. This moral element supplies the key to the symbolism in the novel which seems a more suitable word than allegory with reference to it. Indeed De Foe himself was not so particular about the strict application of the term, having spoken of *Robinson Crusoe* as "emblematic history" in the same sense as allegory in the Preface to the *Serious Reflection*⁵⁵.

The symbolism or the fundamental idea that we can deduce from *Robinson Crusoe* may briefly be stated thus : Defects of character are corrected by suffering through dependence on reason and the Will of God. Everything that human prudence suggests should be done so that one may not be taken at unawares by one's enemy. A man who can unite reason with faith and act in accordance with the

⁵³ *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*, Aitken, vol. III, p. 103.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. IX. Professor Basil Willey speaks of *Robinson Crusoe* as symbolical of the new world "the isolated economic man, pitting his lonely strength successfully against Nature" *The Eighteenth Century Background*, (Chatto & Windus 1940, p. 17).

dictates of prudence and heeds the warnings of intuition need fear no enemy. He will have a fund of resourcefulness which will be equal to any emergency and his leadership will be accepted by all who come into his contact. Neither can such a man want riches and honour which are the earthly modes of the recognition of his worth.

During his Brazil days Crusoe often felt like being in a desert island : "I used to say, I liv'd just like a Man cast away upon some desolate Island, that had nobody there but himself"⁵⁶. The feeling is perfectly intelligible although we know, physically, he was far from lonely. He had at least one friend, Wells, with whom he "went on very sociably together"⁵⁷. He was also working hard at his job as a planter. The reflection, however, gives the author an opportunity to indulge in a piece of maladroit didacticism : "But how just has it been, and how should all Men reflect, that when they compare their present Conditions with others that are worse, Heaven may oblige them to make the Exchange, and be convinc'd of their former Felicity by their Experience"⁵⁸. But Crusoe's feeling was obviously not one of solitude⁵⁹—it is something entirely different and represents a true experience. It will not do to explain it again simply as a premonition, the foreshadowing of a coming event. The sense of solitude which sometimes cannot be avoided in society does not often crystallize as a desolate island

⁵⁶ Robinson Crusoe, vol. I, p. 39.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁹ Crusoe indeed remarks : "I was gotten into an Employment quite remote to my Genius, and directly contrary to the Life I delighted in, and for which I forsook my Father's House, and broke thro' all his good Advice" (vol. I, p. 39). He may have a feeling of discontent but the feeling of solitude is entirely alien to it.



except as a metaphor or symbol. If it does how will an honest, strong and sincere nature stand up to it? What effect will it produce in his character and will it bring out the best that is in him? To all these questions *Robinson Crusoe* provides an answer.

The Island represents a protracted period of solitude without which a man will seldom reach his full stature. As De Foe remarks, "life in general is, or ought to be, but one universal act of solitude". Before Crusoe was cast there, his character was not well formed. He was marked by a strong impulse to go to sea, by a general irresoluteness of temper seen in his decision to return home after the disastrous voyage which ended near Yarmouth and its immediate reversal when an opportunity offered to go to Guinea, a certain alertness of mind of which his escape from slavery provides proof and by a capacity for industry enabling him to obtain good results in his plantation in Brazil. In the desolate island he learnt self-help in the highest measure, he became resourceful and habitually exercised prudence and foresight. He developed a strongly introspective tendency, trusting in God as his chief comfort. Courage, and the capacity for prompt decision too he developed so that he could equally bring under his control the savage and the civilized man. In short, by his self-imposed discipline he acquired an authority which became an attribute of his character rather than of the position he held in the island. Thus if the island is interpreted as a symbol for solitude we can see how well a man will grow in strength and virtues by combining silent work with serious reflection.

^{**} Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe, vol. III, Aitken, p. 2.



Crusoe, it may be recalled, was fully reconciled to his solitude. He could ask himself, "whether thus conversing mutually with my own Thoughts, and, as I hope I may say, with even God himself by Ejaculations, was not better than the utmost Enjoyment of humane Society in the World"⁶¹. Solitude is thus shown to be a valuable discipline, enriching character in many different ways. But a man who spends a quarter of a century in solitude may find it hard to return to society and we may justly wonder if with all his exceptional virtues he can bear ordinary human intercourse. And so Crusoe's return to society is carefully graduated. The savage Friday breaks the solitude to which Crusoe was used and by his devotion and willingness to serve, he makes himself agreeable to his master. The Spaniard who is rescued is a civilized foreigner with whom Crusoe speaks in Portuguese and Spanish, languages in which he is far from being at home. Yet the Spaniard's arrival no doubt gives him a taste for society which he realizes more fully when the English captain is brought to the island by the mutineers. These facts are noted as they throw light upon the minute care with which the author manages the details of his story.

In the Preface to *The Serious Reflections De Foe writes*: "In a word, there is not a circumstance in the imaginary story but has its just allusion to a real story, and chimes part for part and step for step with the inimitable Life of Robinson Crusoe"⁶². In the *Review* in 1711 he made an allusion to some of his experiences closely resembling the account in *Robinson Crusoe*, given nearly eight years later. . . . "I have gone through

⁶¹ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, pp. 156-157.

⁶² Preface, pp. XI-XII, Aitken, vol. III.



a Life of Wonders, and am the Subject of a vast Variety of Providences; I have been fed more by Miracle than *Elijah*, when the Ravens were his Purveyours"⁶³. Crusoe's story is also in the same tune. "I ought to give daily Thanks for that daily Bread, which nothing but a Croud of Wonders could have brought. That I ought to consider I had been fed even by Miracle, even as great as that of feeding *Elijah* by Ravens"⁶⁴. De Foe once more speaking of himself in the Preface to the *Serious Reflections* returns to what seems to be his favourite imagery: "(I was) fed by miracles greater than that of ravens"⁶⁵. De Foe's much-quoted remark: "(I) have in less than half a year tasted the difference between the Closet of a King and the Dungeon of *Newgate*"⁶⁶, reminds us again of Crusoe's surprising change "from a Merchant to a miserable Slave"⁶⁷. De Foe's religious experiences also recall those of Crusoe's: ". . . my only Happiness in this, I have always been kept Chearful, Easy and Quiet, enjoying a perfect calm of Mind, Clearness of Thought, and Satisfaction not to be broken in upon by whatever may happen to come. If any Man ask me how I arrived to it? I answer him in short, By a Constant Serious Application to the great Solemn and mighty work of Resignation to the Will of Heaven"⁶⁸. The three important statements made by De Foe about his life refer to sudden changes of fortune, a miraculous provision for his physical needs and Resignation to Providence. These three are also the most important facts about Crusoe.

⁶³ Preface to volume VIII of the Review, 1711.

⁶⁴ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, pp. 152-153.

⁶⁵ Preface to the "Serious Reflections", p. XI.

⁶⁶ Preface to volume VIII of the Review, 1711.

⁶⁷ *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. I, p. 20.

⁶⁸ Preface, Review, vol. VIII, 1711.



Thus De Foe was not being entirely fanciful when he pointed to a correspondence between Crusoe's adventures and his own life.⁶⁹

As we have noticed in previous chapters De Foe wrote allegories on topical subjects as well as on subjects which are more orthodox for the purpose. His allegory of Modesty, quoted in Chapter VII, shows how well he can infuse suspense and drama into an allegory. We shall conclude this section by short quotations from some of his allegories as illustration of his love of this literary form, a further proof of which is provided by his interpretation of some ancient myths. He regarded, for example, the stories of Prometheus and Atlas, of Daedalus and Icarus, as symbolical. De Foe held it necessary for the full appreciation of the artist's design to interpret it with the help of imagination. Thus reading a book or looking at a picture meant for him the discovery of the author's purpose which should never be confused with what is plain only to the naked eye. It is not always, however, that people care to probe into the author's meaning by taking a little extra trouble. He complains against their dullness : "their heavy imagination can supply nothing, they judge of what appears, and not of what is design'd"⁷⁰. These remarks should be an additional warning

⁶⁹ There are many minor points on which there is resemblance between De Foe and Crusoe, the surnames with the suggestion of foreign extraction is one of them ; a less minor one is the prudence and moderation they both practise and the interest in making things that their characters reveal.

⁷⁰ Review, July, 4, 1704, Facsimile Book 2, p. 153.



not to overlook the fact that De Foe as a story teller often thought in terms of allegory and symbolism just as a reader of stories he tried to see more than met the eye.

De Foe gives the following interpretation of the symbolism in the myth of Prometheus : "Prometheus, who is said to be chained down to mount Caucasus, with a vulture preying upon his bowels ; the substance or meaning of which was no more than this : that he gave himself so entirely up to the study of astronomy, and to search after the knowledge of the heavenly motions, that the eager desire after the knowledge of them gnawed into his very vitals, consumed his natural strength, and proved fatal to his health ; and that this was upon mount Caucasus, intimated only, that he chose a high hill, or a summit among those mountains, where he used to lie on his back whole nights together, to make his observations more exactly of the revolving motions of the stars, till he contracted distempers by the colds and damps of the air, so that he was, as it were chained down to those mountains, till the diseases he contracted eat out his very bowels" ⁷¹. The symbolism in the myth of Atlas he explains in the following manner : ". . . he is feigned by the ancients to carry the world upon his shoulders ; that is to say, his precepts of government supported the nations, and preserved order and discipline in the world ; and for this he was, as he well deserved, chosen by the people of Afric to be their king" ⁷². In his *Essay upon Literature* De Foe discusses the symbolism of Prometheus and Atlas, more briefly, but without deviating from the interpretation already cited and then proceeds to analyse the

⁷¹ A System of Magic, The Novels and Miscellaneous Works of De Foe, Scott, vol. XII, p. 30.

⁷² Ibid., p. 41.



myths of Daedalus and Icarus : "The like of Daedalus and Icarus, and his making Wings to fly in the Air, which was no more than his inventing Sails for Boats and Ships to sail upon the Sea, and the like"⁷³.

Whatever one may think of the interpretations De Foe has given of the various myths of antiquity, they very clearly indicate a trait in his character, namely a habit of reading between the lines for the discovery of the story-teller's motive. From this it may be legitimate to hold that his own practice led him often to seek the symbolical in human affairs which he depicted as a novelist. The usual symbolism employed by him is that poverty is a snare from which deliverance is not, however, secured by riches but by repentance. This will mean a change of values and even if ill-gotten money is not cast away⁷⁴ as a mark of reformation, what is important is a contrite heart. As already noticed, this is not the symbolism in *Robinson Crusoe* in which the author had a more personal vision to communicate.

De Foe wrote the following allegories among others : Modesty (*Review*, August 8, 1704) ; The Philosopher and the Christian, (*The Storm*, 1704, pp. 5-6) ; Two Dogs (*Review*, May 31, 1705) ; An Old Lion (*Review*, November 24, 1705) ; Credit (*Review*, January 10, 1706) ; Moderation (*Review*, February 28, 1706) ; Repentance (*Review*, November 2, 1706) ; Devil (*Ibid.*) ; Popular Rage (*Review*, March 17, 1709) ; The Lady and the Dog (*Review*, December 8, 1709) ; Faction (*Review*, March 21, 1710) ; Britain (*Review*, April 11, 1710) ; Battle Between the Church of England and the

⁷³ An Essay upon Literature, London, 1726, p. 116.

⁷⁴ See, Fortunate Mistress, vol. II, p. 74 ; Colonel Jack, vol. I, p. 188 ; Moll Flanders, vol. II, 114 ; Captain Singleton, p. 323.



Dissenters (*Review*, April 15, 1710); A House on Fire (*Review*, February 22, 1712); A Horse Fair (*Review*, March 21, 1712); Allegory of Physic (*Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover*, London, 1713, pp. 20-23, 30).

De Foe seems to have been the first allegorist of finance as will appear from the two specimens that follow :

CREDIT (*Review*, January 10, 1706, vol. III,
Facsimile Book 6) pp. 17-18.

"If once she be disoblig'd, she's the most difficult to be Friends again with us, of any thing in the World; and yet she will court those most, that have no occasion for her; and will stand at their Doors neglected and ill-us'd, scorn'd, and rejected, like a Reggar, and never leave them: But let such have a Care of themselves, and be sure they never come to want her; for, if they do, they may depend upon it, she will pay them home, and never be reconcil'd to them, but upon a World of Entreaties, and the severe penance of some years Prosperity".

(An Extract)

Poor CREDIT (*Review*, February 1, 1711,
Facsimile Book 18; p. 534).

"POOR CREDIT! sunk and dejected, sighing and walking alone; I met her t'other Day in the Fields, I hardly knew her, she was so lean, so pale; look'd so sickly, so faint, and was so meanly dress'd; but when I came nearer to her, and saw The Old Air of Honesty that sat always upon her Face, I worship'd her Immediately, and paid all the Homage a Friend to Commerce ow'd her.

She vouchsafed to own her humble Votary, and smiling a little, told me, she was in a Condi-



tion only to acknowledge I was her Friend—And so attempted to go on—I would have interrupted her with speaking something, but she told me she could not stay to say any more to me now; if ever she return'd to *England* again, she would—I startled at the Word, threw my self at her Feet, and beg'd I might have the Liberty to speak to her—Which having obtain'd, I told her I was exceedingly surprized to hear her speak of returning to *England*, etc., which imply'd she was going away from us; I was going on, when she return'd short upon me, why, What should I do here? I have staid too long here already; you know how I have been us'd, how I have been Mob'd on one Side, and Mob'd on t'other Side, Bully'd and Insulted by Parties and Factions, and yet I have born it all with more Patience than I used to bear such Treatment with; I have, in short, stay'd till I am quite Ruin'd; I have neither Money, nor Trade, or Fund, to Act upon; She made no Scruple to tell me, she resolv'd to go directly to *France*".

Repentance (*Review*, Nov. 2, 1706, vol. III,
Facsimile Book 8; pp. 523-524).

Whatever thou dost therefore, if thou hast a Mind to be easie, never look in there; for that troublesome Fellow, call'd Conscience, is the worst Devil on this side Hell; 'tis a Place the Devil is never out of, unless—Unless what—Somewhat thou dost not care to hear of, rout him out—That is a whole Detachment of a sorrowful Army, under a melancholly General, call'd Repentance, and there are so many uneasie, unhappy Mortifications attend it, that 'tis a Work, I doubt, thou wilt never like".



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MOST IMPORTANT WORKS CONSULTED 265

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• INDEX

- A**cademy, The, 74.
 Academy of History, 84.
 Academy of Music, 84.
 Actium, 29.
 Addison, Joseph, 41.
 Adrian, 29.
 Africa, 28, 29, 106, 138, 188, 258.
 Aitken, G. A., 2, 28, 118, 180, 181.
 Aix-la-chapelle, 28.
 Aldgate, 1, 8, 9.
 Aldington, Richard, 80.
 Alexander, 29.
 Allegory, 251, 252, 257, 259-261.
 Allegory of Modesty, 114-118, 259.
 All Men are Enemies, 80.
 Alps, 29.
 Amadis of Gaul, 139.
 Amy, 53, 150, 214, 215, 221.
 Ancient Mariner, The Rime of the, 173.
 Anthony and Cleopatra, 243.
 Apparition of Mrs. Veal, 42, 118-119.
 Appeal to Honour and Justice, An, 87-97, 173.
 Applebee's Weekly Journal, 2, 26, 81, 85, 139, 179, 180, 189, 191, 200-202, 206.
 Arabs, 105.
 Archbishop of St. Andrews, 122.
 Armada, 29.
 Assyria, 188.
 Athenaeum, The, 2.
 Atkins, William, 105.
 Atlas, 257, 258.
 Augusta Triumphans, 21, 69, 70, 75, 77, 83, 84, 114, 149.
 Augustus, 29.
 Avery, 140.
- B**ajazette, 29.
 Baker, Ernest A., 74.
 Banerjee, Professor P. N., see *Preface*.
 Barbadoes, 125.
 Bargrave, Mrs., 119.
 Bath, 209.
 Battersby, Kitt, 25.
 Battle of Mons, 150.
 Bay of All Saints, 228.
- Bedlam, 44.
 Beggar's Opera, 141.
 Belisarius, 29.
 Bengal, 29.
 Betagh's Voyage Round the World, 28.
 Bible, 168, 171, 188, 245.
 Bothwell-Brigg, 121, 122.
 Bowrey, Thomas, 102.
 Brains Trust, 85.
 Brayley, E. W., 22, 266.
 Brazil, 163, 236, 239, 253.
 Bremen, 187.
 Breton, 180, 206.
 Bristol, 74.
 Britain, 1, 29, 83, 127, 137.
 British Museum, 22.
 Brumpton, Lady, 216.
 Bülbülmüller, Karl D., 27, 37, 189.
 Bulgaria, 1.
 Bullhead Tavern, 9.
- Cadiz, 95, 173.
 Caesar, 29.
 Calvinism, 173.
 Cambridge Bibliography, 114.
 Cambridge University Library, 22.
 Camden, 45.
 Cannibals, 239, 241.
 Captain Jack, 140.
 Captain Singleton, 28, 31, 39, 54, 55, 64, 70, 76, 103, 128, 138, 141, 160, 161, 176, 206, 207, 225-233, 259.
 Captain Wilmot, 229, 232.
 Cartouche, Lewis, 139.
 Caucasus, 258.
 Ceylon, 230.
 Chandler, F. W., 139.
 Character of a Sneaker, The, 184-185.
 Characters, 180-205.
 Charles II, 154.
 Chief Justice Parker, 173.
 Chili, 99.
 China, 29.
 Clayton, Sir Robert, 58, 220.
 Cole, G. D. H., 28.
 Coleridge, 173.



- Colonel Jack, 30, 35, 37, 38, 39, 44, 55, 62, 72, 74, 75, 76, 102, 128, 131, 134, 150, 161, 162, 176, 180, 206, 207, 221-225, 233, 259.
- Columbus, 29.
- Complete English Gentleman, The, 24, 27, 29, 33, 34, 37, 38, 43, 189.
- Complete English Tradesman, The, 33, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 68, 178, 180, 189, 190.
- Congo, 28.
- Contemporary Review, The, 2.
- Cornhill, 147.
- Cornhill Magazine, The, 83.
- Cortez, 29.
- Court of Enquiries, 83.
- Court Merchant, 83.
- Covenanters, 121.
- Crusoe, Timothy, 25.
- Daedalus, 257, 259.
- Daily Advertiser, The, 41.
- Daily Post, The, 2.
- Dante's Inferno, 73.
- De Foe, Daniel, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 17; 19 (didacticism); 20, 24; on the art of conversation, 24; De Foe's Library, 28; 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39; on antiquity, 40; catalogue of books of De Foe, 40; accuracy, moderation and rational temper of De Foe, 41f; 44-48, 52, 53, 55; on indolence, 56; 58-60, 62-65, 69, 72, 75-79; on divorce, 80-82; 83, 86, 88, 91; on the Pretender, 92; 97, 98, 99; Political Pragmatist, 101 (see also Preface); 102, 105, 106, 113; Didacticism, 115; 121; strangeness as an element in fiction, 128; visual imagination, 129-131; 138, 134, 135, 138, 139-141, 148, 150; Bible, 154; Didacticism, 155f, 158, 174; faith in human nature 222; Similarity to De Foe, 224; the Supernatural, 173-178; 186, 199, 202, 205, 207, 213, 232, 233, 242; the supernatural, 250-251; Didacticism, 253; 254, 256, 258.
- Defoe, Daniel, His Life and Recently Discovered Writings 5, 26, 50, 81, 84, 85, 123, 139, 140, 180, 191, 192, 201, 202.
- Defoe, Daniel: How to Know Him, 89.
- De La Plata, 99.
- Derbyshire, 45.
- Dickory Cronke, 56.
- Discovery of the Conduct of Receivers and Thief-Takers, 139.
- Dissenters, 16, 93, 119, 153.
- Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, 101.
- Don Diego Hugstado de Mendoza, 142.
- Don Quixote, 242.
- Dottin, Paul, 138.
- Drake, Sir Francis, 29.
- Due Preparations for the Plague, 2, 10, 11.
- Duke of Monmouth, 93.
- Dunciad, 41.
- Dutch, 214, 215, 216, 218, 220.
- Earle, 180, 206.
- East Indies, 199, 201, 219.
- Edinburgh, 97, 107.
- Eighteenth Century Background, The, 252.
- Elijah, 173, 256.
- Elizabeth, Queen, 84.
- England, 200, 212, 231, 251.
- England in the Eighteenth Century, 76.
- England under Queen Anne, 24.
- English History of Speed, 30.
- English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, 156.
- Essay on Projects, 35, 69, 70, 71, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 95, 114, 199, 202.
- Essay upon Literature, 258, 259.
- Ethiopia, 85.
- Europe, 29.
- Examiner, 34.
- Family Instructor, The, 149, 158-160, 176, 178, 182, 192, 203.
- Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, The, 22, 29, 56, 104, 175, 176, 242, 243.
- Female Quixote, 192-193.
- Fen Church-Street, 44.
- Fielding, 156.
- Flanders, 150.
- Flying Post, 91, 92.
- Foreigners, The, 95.
- Formal-Stiff, 180, 191.

INDEX

273

Fortunate Mistress, The, 31, 52, 53, 57, 58, 61, 64, 79, 80, 82, 102, 119, 131, 150, 177, 198, 207, 210, 213-221, 259.
 France, 2, 28, 128, 150, 199, 208.
 Fretum Magellanicum, 99.
 Friday, 130, 153, 240, 241, 242, 255.
 Froger's Voyage to Africa, 28.
 Funeral, The, 216.

Gallery of Venice, 252.
 Gardiner, Dorothy, 118.
 Gaul, 29.
 Gay, 141.
 G. B. S., 202.
 George I, 89, 96.
 George II, 139.
 Germany, 28.
 Gildon, Charles, 150.
 Giving Alms No Charity, 55, 56.
 Godolphin, 96, 99.
 Goldsmith, Alexander, 98.
 Gow, 140.
 Grace Church Street, 9.
 Granicus, 29.
 Greek, 187, 188.
 Greville, Charles C. F., 139.
 Guillot, Claude, 98.
 Guignes, 236, 254.

Hall, 180.
 Hamburgh, 187.
 Hannibal, 29.
 Hanover, 28.
 Hanoverian Succession, 89.
 Hardwicke Act, 1753, 74.
 Harlan, Virginia, 23.
 Harley, Robert, Earl of Oxford, 20, 69, 88, 90, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 101, 102, 107.
 Harrow-Alley, 4.
 Haversham, Lord, 109.
 Headrigg, Cuddie, 121.
 Hebrew, 187.
 Herbert, A. P., 80, 81, 82.
 High Flyer, 184, 185-186.
 Historical Manuscripts Commission, 97.
 Historical Sources of the Journal of the Plague Year, The, 22.
 History of Gustavus Adolphus, 30.
 History of Low Country Wars, 30.

O.P. 87—18.

History of the Spaniard's Conquest of Mexico, 30.
 History of the Turks, 30.
 Hitchin, F. N., 139.
 Holland, 85, 128.
 Holy Deadlock, 80, 82.
 Honorius, 29.
 Horace, 188.
 Hull, 163, 235.

Icarus, 257, 259.
 Imaginary Destruction of the Island of St. Vincent, 4, 114, 123f., 128, 131.
 Island of Martinico, 125, 135.
 Isle of Hispaniola, 125.
 Israelites, 120.
 Italy, 28, 128, 200, 214, 217.

Jack, 137.
 Jacobite, 89, 93, 94, 112.
 James, King, 93.
 Jeremiah, 16.
 Jesus Christ, 169, 170.
 Job, 162.
 Johnson, Dr., 242.
 Jonah, 12.
 Jonson, Ben, 180, 199.
 Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 23.
 Journal of the Plague Year, A, 1-18, 20-23, 30, 53, 130, 133, 136, 178, 180.
 Julius Caesar, 243.
 Jure Divino, 41, 105, 154.
 Juvenal, 168.

Kensington Gardens, 139.
 Knaresborough, 45.

Lancashire, 208, 212.
 Lazarillo de Tormes, 142, 143, 147, 148.
 Leaden-hall-Street, 44.
 Lecky, W. E. H., 76.
 Lee, William, 2, 5, 26, 50, 81, 84, 85, 123, 139, 140, 180, 189, 191, 192, 201, 202.
 Legion's Memorial, 101.
 Lennox, Mrs. Charlotte, 192.
 Leonard Love-wit, 180.
 Lepanto, 29.



- Letter to the Whigs, A, 185.
 Life of Daniel Defoe, The, 242.
 Life of Lazarillo de Tormes, The, 142.
 Lime-Street, 44.
 Lisbon, 251.
 Literature of Rogues, 139.
 Livy's Roman History, 30.
 Locke, John, 41.
 London, 2, 7, 12, 20, 21, 22, 25, 70, 74, 83, 116, 128, 138, 163, 231, 235.
 London-Wall, 44.
 Lothbury, 6.
 Ludgate, 1, 52.
- Madagascar, 104, 105, 225, 232.
 Mall, The, 117.
 Mamaluks, 29.
 Markham, Sir Clement, K.C.B., 142.
 Married Women's Property Act, 80.
 Marquess of Steyne, 219.
 Marseilles, 2.
 Maxfield, Ezra Kempton, 144.
 Memoirs of a Cavalier, 30, 130, 180.
 Memoirs of the Church of Scotland, 121-123.
 Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Victoria, 139.
 Mercator, 92.
 Mercure de France, 138.
 Mercure Scandale: Or Advice from the Scandalous Club, 114, 157, 158.
 Milton, 81.
 Mist's Journal, 5, 50, 156, 180, 193, 194, 200, 201.
 Moffat, James, 43.
 Moggy, 225.
 Moll Flanders, 31, 44, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 63, 70, 72, 74, 75, 78, 79, 102, 128, 131, 134, 140, 160, 176, 177, 196, 202, 206, 208-213, 232, 259.
 Mont Pelé, 137.
 Mookerjee, The Hon'ble Dr. S. P., see *Preface*.
 Moore, T., 41.
 Moorfields, 44, 127.
 Morton, the Rev. Charles, 24.
 Moses, 120.
 Mouchat, 76, 225.
 Mozambique, 138, 226, 232.
 Negroe, 76, 106, 223, 225, 226, 227, 230, 232.
 Newgate, 73, 74, 88, 93, 143, 160, 211, 212, 233, 256.
 Newington-Green Academy, 24, 32, 40.
 New Spain, 125.
 Newton, F. M., 48.
 New Voyage Round the World, A, 85, 99, 130, 180.
 Nicholson, Watson, 22, 23.
 Nineteenth Century, The, 118.
 Notes and Queries, 41, 102.
- Observations on the Bankrupts' Bill, 1706, 48.
 Of Royal Educacion, 37.
 Old Mortality, 121.
 Oldmixon, 28.
 Oronoco, 125, 128.
 Overburian Characters, The, 191.
 Overbury, 180, 206.
- Pall Mall, 219.
 Paradise Lost, 246.
 Paradise Regained, 243.
 Paris, 211, 220.
 Parson Adams, 156.
 Paylor, W. J., 191.
 Pentateuch, 154.
 Persia, 29, 188.
 Persius, 188.
 Pharisee, 181, 182, 183.
 Philological Quarterly, 41.
 Pilgrim's Progress, 242.
 Plan of English Commerce, A, 63, 85, 103.
 PMLA., 144.
 Poland, 1.
 Political History of the Devil, The, 184.
 Poor Man's Plea, The, 157.
 Pope, Alexander, 41.
 Popery, 154.
 Portland MSS., 20, 28, 43, 69, 88, 89, 91, 99, 107.
 Portugal, 20, 28, 199, 225, 232, 255.
 Potts, L. J., see *Preface*.
 Present State of the Parties, The, 25, 26, 32.
 Pretender, 92, 93, 94.
 Problematic Society, 85.
 Prometheus, 257, 258.
 Protestant Monastery, 85, 180.

INDEX

275

- Psalm, 15.
 Pye Tavern, 12, 14, 18.
- Quaker, 144, 145, 230.
 Quaker Lady, 221.
 Quaker William, 227-233.
 Quixot, 240.
- R**easons against the Succession of the House of Hanover, 94, 260.
Reformation of Manners, 76.
Remarkable Passage of an Apparition, 41.
Restoration Court, 11.
Review, The, 1, 25, 26, 28, 35, 41, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 55, 56, 59, 63, 64, 65, 87, 88, 92, 96, 104, 107, 108, 109, 112, 114, 115, 151, 154, 158, 186, 193, 195-197, 234, 255, 256, 257, 259, 260, 261.
Review of English Studies, 48.
 Rio Camaroni, 99.
 Robin, 213.
 Robinson Crusoe, 5, 6, 7, 28, 31, 42, 43, 56, 63, 64, 86, 88, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 118, 123, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 135, 138, 150, 153, 155, 162-173, 174, 175, 176, 178, 206, 234-257.
Rogues on Both Sides, 110, 111, 113, 184.
Roman Catholic Church, 153.
Roman Empire, 29.
 Rome, 188.
 Roorda, Gerridina, 43.
Royal Academy for Military Exercises, 85.
 Roxana, 31, 51, 54, 55, 61, 62, 70, 75, 79, 82, 102, 128, 150, 177, 197, 202, 206, 207, 208, 211, 212, 213-221, 224.
 Rumbald, 139.
 Russia, 29, 199.
 Rye-House Plot, 139.
- Sacheverell, 92.
 St. Augustine, 188.
 St. Christophers, 125, 126, 132.
 St. Cyprian, 188.
 St. Mary-Axe, 44.
 St. Pierre, 137.
 St. Vincent, 126, 127, 133, 135, 138.
- Scotland, 97.
 Scott, Sir Walter, 121.
 Second Thoughts Are Best, 69, 71, 73, 141.
 Secord, A. W., 28, 29, 138.
 Secret History of the October Club, The, 184.
 Selymus, 29.
 Serious Reflections . . . of Robinson Crusoe, 152, 174, 181, 183, 198, 252, 254, 255, 256.
 Several Embassies and Voyages to Japan, 28.
 Shakespeare, 177.
 Sharp, Rebecca, 219.
 Shepherd, 140.
 Shortest Way with Dissenters, The, 55, 56, 87, 89, 114, 119-120, 202.
 Sinhalese, 230.
 Sir Courtly Nice, 180.
 Sir Richard, 159, 160.
 Sir Thomas, 203, 204, 205.
 Sir Timothy Titlepage, 186-187.
 Sir William—, 107, 108.
 Smollett, 61.
 Solomon, 120.
 Solomon Eagle, 13.
 Solomon's fool, 198.
 Son of David, 169.
 Souffrière, 137.
 Spain, 28, 29, 199, 255.
 Spaniard, 103, 106, 241, 248, 255.
 Spectator, 186.
 Stamm, Rudolf G., 41.
 Stanhope, 92.
 Steele, Richard, 216.
 Stephen, Leslie, 156.
 Storm, The, 41, 43, 259.
 Street Robberies, etc., 32, 69, 71, 72, 73, 140-149.
 Studies in the Narrative Method of Defoe, 29, 138.
 Susan, 221.
 Sutherland, Professor James, see *Preface*; 2, 7, 24, 25, 34, 47, 51, 64, 65, 85, 87, 89, 92, 100-101, 109.
 Swift, Jonathan, 34.
 Switzerland, 28.
 Symbolism, 248, 252.
 System of Magic, A, 136, 156, 187, 258.
- Tamerlain, 29.
 Tattle Aid, 216.



Temple, Sir R. C., 102.
Thatcher, W. S., see *Preface*.
Tilbury Pantile Works, 85, 87.
Token-House Yard, 6.
Tom, 137, 159.
Tom Folio, 186.
Tomombejus, 29.
Toey, 111, 184.
Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, A, 28, 44, 45, 52, 53, 56, 65.
Tradewell, 180, 189.
Trent, W. P., 89.
Trevelyan, G. M., 24.
True-Born Englishman, The, 95.
Turkey, 1.
Turkish Rover, 236.
Tutchin, 95.
Tyburn, 146, 147.

Universal Spectator, 155.
Use and Abuse of Married Bed, The, 152, 153, 203-205.
University of London, 83.

Venice, 231.
Virgil, 188.
Virginia, 31, 140, 223, 225.

Vision of the Angelic World, A, 174.
Vistula, 1.
Volpone, 199.
Voyages into South America, 28.

Wafer's Isthmus of America, 28.
Walachia, 1.
Wallace's Account of Orkney, 28.
Walsingham, 84.
Warsaw, 1.
Wesley, Samuel, 25.
What if the Pretender - should Come? 94.
Whig, 110, 184.
Wild, 140.
Will, 160.
Willey, Professor Basil, 252.
William, King, 93, 95.
William Walters, 160, 161, 176, 227-233.
Wilson, Walter, 104.
Wright, Thomas, 242.

Yarmouth, 168, 251.
York, 137.

Zachary, 190-191.

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